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FORTIONARY



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II. NOTION

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SAUCTION

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By Roman McClay

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Contents

-1 Darkness of Self; Noon of Others

0. Mere River Ocean

1. The Scottish Curse

2. Masculine Skye

3. The Books; the Guns of Rimbaud

4. The Blood of the Covenant

5. The Water of the Womb

6. The Ships of *Bordeaux*

7. *Ad Infinitum*

8. A Time for Tragedy; A Time for War

9. Prætorian Guard

10. Accelerate into the Curve

11. In the Gut of a Cat Laugh

12. Black Jacobins

13. ELK

14. 79

14.6 King of Man and the Isles

15. Right Up Until it's an Order

16. Steel Kvlt

17. The Knight and the Rook

18. JACKS L NDON

19. And the Crows Fly and Fly and We Follow

20. Those that Return to the Sea

21. TRAiN

22. His Task split like Waves in Each Direction

- 23. Fear Trap
- 24. For Even Blackness Has Its Brilliancy
- 25. *Sit jus liceat que perie Poetis*
- 26. The Thief is Satisfied with Diamonds...
- 27. 132 Romans
- 28. But, for that I needed a War
- 29. Wolves of Vinland
- 30. The Apiary
- 31. *Sangres* to the West
- 32. 1000
- 33. He may play the Jack of Diamonds
- 34. The Breakdown of the Bi-Cameral Mind
- 35. *Jeux sans Frontières*
- 36. SANCTION
- 37. He Had Such an Eye
- 38. Thermal Gain
- 39. Not One Man in Five Cycles
- 40. He May Lay the Queen of Spades
- 41. Deep Asleep as Wolves
- 42. Master & Emissary
- 43. All Over Captain

*One whose general is capable and not interfered with by the ruler will be
victorious*

-Sun Tzu

*Then it was that his torn body and gashed soul bled into one another; and
so interfusing*

-The Author

*Now, the Lord had said unto Abram, Get thee out of thy country, and from
thy kindred, and from thy father's house, unto a land that I will show thee*

-Genesis 12:1

-1 Darkness of Self; Noon of Others If you're going to try, go all the way. Otherwise, don't even start. This could mean losing girlfriends, wives, relatives and maybe even your mind. It could mean not eating for three of four days. It could mean freezing on a park bench. It could mean jail. It could mean derision. It could mean mockery - isolation. Isolation is the gift. All the others are tests of your endurance, of how much you really want to do it. And you'll do it, despite rejection and the worst odds. And it will be better than anything else you can imagine. If you're going to try, go all the way. There's no other feeling like it. You will be alone with the gods, and the nights will flame with fire. You will ride life straight to perfect laughter. It's the only good fight there is.

Factotum, [Bukowski, Charles]

Here's one who sold his country, Foisted a tyrant on her, set up laws Or nullified them for a price; another Entered his daughter's room to take a bride Forbidden him. All these dared monstrous wrong And took what they dared try for. If I had A hundred tongues, a hundred mouths, a voice Of iron, I could not tell of all these shapes Their crimes had taken, or their punishments.

All this he heard from her who for long years Had served Apollo. Then she said: "Come now, be on your way, and carry out your mission."

The Aeneid; Book VI [Virgil]

Give me an utter wreck, if wreck I do...

White Jacket [The Author]

I. 2039 e.v.

Lyndon was naked and shorn of nearly all but stubbles -shadow- of emerging dark hair.

The tank was being scrubbed *via* UV light from above and with *nanobots* from within, and the bottom of the massive aquarium was alive with abandoned and invaded coral and a bedrock of limestone and roan granite and black clay; the White shark swam against the current at the pelagic level.

The water pressed down heavily, ponderously, clearly.

Lyndon was standing at the glass view-screen unencumbered by not merely clothes but of wants or needs; he was just watching and trying to see what he saw with his newly improved eyes. His homeostatic system was dialed in; his allostatic system had just run its sweep and adjusted all emotional levels to a new baseline.

It was 0000hrs, and he was awake.

He had been fasting for 24-hours; his blood sugar had been set by his respirocytes and *nano-9s* to maintain itself as long as he didn't expend more than his metabolic minimum for cognition and immune-response; which was 40-calories *per* hour. He rested the body and let only the mind perform his punishment of work.

Soon the mind would do all the work , he thought.

He watched the white shark move in a rhythmic fashion; head opposite of tail, flexed in the middle; that large corpus of ancient aquatic predatory muscle and cartilage; an atavistic amalgam. He watched 500-million years of perfection; not true perfection, but the endless ungraspable digits of *pi* after the decimal, with each iteration, each elongation, each unit of time and element of space adding one more integer making a better -more perfect- circle in the mind of the great Mathematician Himself.

The shark was 500-million years of God solving for pi. Nobody else thought that was what the cosmos was; but Lyndon thought it and he was grateful to play his small part to help God solve the equation -the source of His pain- via his own.

God and he had made a handshake deal on this very thing, he believed.

Lyndon knew there were things he was missing; his mind searched it out like the tongue in the space where a tooth used to be. But he had no idea what it was he now didn't know; what he used to know but now did not. The other memories were of no use; unlike a tooth on either side might be clue of what that gap used to contain. He had no idea he was receiving pain -as stimuli- from not memories, but new abrading's; from not his past, but from other futures.

The perfection of what works, he thought; floating past what he did not know.

What is good enough, what the ungraspable earth has allowed to live for one second, and one second more -and one more- until that second is so long that everything else left, all of us, Lyndon thought, are more 'it' -it, the equation, the whole- than 'we' -we, the integer- the discreet. We share more with that white shark than we do with whatever it is we think is 'us. That tiny, avant-garde, neo-mania of neo-cortex, that thin -powerful, but thin- cortical cap, the thing that has just barely learned to metaphorize the "I", much less live in the world, he thought, is nothing compared to the whole.

Tribe over man, species over tribe, mammals over species of man, sea-beasts over land-animals, microbes -the single cells of the ancient ocean- over us all. And the earth over even those. And God over that.

And God subsumed by the math, he thought lastly -breezily- as he watched the tank, the water, the shark. His eyes watched each particle that made up each whole.

Each is part of the whole above it, he then thought. And yet we think we are individuals when we aren't even in charge of this corporeal body itself; let alone everything else, he continued. He smiled at how illusions of self are required to even get out of bed. He watched the mouth and counted teeth he

could see and felt he saw things others did not. He had no idea how much he missed.

Illusions and hatred, he thought as if packing a bag; leaving room - somewhere- for love.

We share a dopaminergic system with that apex fish, he thought as he stared at the giant shark in the watery tank. *The core of us, the ancient parts of the brain, the oldest part, the part we'd respect more if we were First Peoples from First Nations or, he added, the Japanese; if we were of those cultures that respect the Elder, the primogeniture, the one who came before. That part was sub-cortical, below the waterline*, he thought; *and it ruled . It was 2/3^{rds} the earth, and 2/3^{rds} of man's mind; yet we live -we think- upon the shore, the denuded surface, the sand.*

We call the smallest part our home , he thought of the land.

He loved the back of his neck shorn close like this; he raised his right hand and rubbed his palm on the stubble -beneath the braid-hawk- that ended in a chevron five-inches above his neckline.

The gills of the shark flapped like linen in wind; the white belly absorbed his gaze; his vision -with unfocused eyes- fell into that underbelly; he felt his mind's eye circumnavigate the dark grey of his shark's dorsal fin and northern hemispheric skin. He let his left eye straggle and watch the caudal fin flex and yield to the small turbulence in the clearing water. Pectoral fins grabbed his attention as they bent and yawed to balance and steer and elevate and then descend the fish; he felt his fingers begin to itch and make avatars for themselves in his imagination that rested in the precaudal pit, pricked themselves on rows and rows of dentine, and then with this avatar of blood-red he drew images like antelope or bear on the caves of some watery *Lascaux* of the fish and the man too.

With both hands he made a fist; first and last finger now itched.

He annealed his mind to the shark in reverie, imagination, thoughts that built infrastructure he imagined striding into one day. He saw giant ribs of fish as cathedral; he saw a stomach bottom of grass.

On the mountain top we are all snow leopards , he then thought, and he then thought of the black and dark grey tattoo on his left shin of the man

who swore he'd never go unarmed again.

The water contained small bubbles that grouped together like chains, helix of DNA; like ideas of air pushing out against the hydrostatic pressure at that depth. *How deep will it get?* he asked, as he imagined the mind of the shark, its mouth just agape; an unflared nostril; an eye un-occluded as it will become once the attack cannot be recalled -what they call a ballistic movement- yet neither was the eye wide and unguarded.

The white shark was in a state that he could not articulate.

He could measure -and the water systems did measure the entire nervous system of the fish; its metabolism and brain activity, the electro-impulses sent and received by the *ampullae Lorenzini* he shared with the rays and chimeras- but neither he nor the aquarium's system could articulate it beyond numbers and chemistry. He allowed the math to scaffold the biology, and he demanded the flesh then unfurl so he could read its poetry at last.

But the words would not come. Not yet. For now he absorbed raw material; feelings, not yet ideas.

He was mute; and even his inner-monologue was unlettered, he felt -more impressionistically and with a nimbus of old short words- tribal feelings and *dorso-lateral* shadows that grew and shrank on a light surface of the mind. Data came in; massively, and yet he thought it was merely from the fish in the tank.

He monitored the *pH* of the water with his Post-Genetic Coder; he had recently received a new implant of a computer with 100-terabytes of storage and processing power; it connected to the web, and to each system in his home. It ran the large turbines, thermal gain and salinity manipulation of the water tank; a concrete box 100-feet by 100-feet by 100-feet deep.

He thought of the limestone beneath.

He thought of the grapevines in the narrow and tall gardens that radiated out from this hub; he saw each tine of the wheel of this home. He felt the sun driven deep into the wells on his face's imagination now as the saltwater's LEDs lit up the shark from just behind and above and cast a shadow down onto the polished concrete at his feet.

The whole subterranean aquarium was made of concrete 10-feet thick; and it had a giant screen to view its contents. It was clear glass and LED screen both; transparent when desired; then blaring an image when the shark swam off from this zone and the aquarium's cameras projected live-images of the fish to the screen.

The shark was pushed by giant turbines, like a watery treadmill. It pushed it from each direction, from bottom and top as well; although the shark could break the surface if it desired. It would come back down within an incessant stream pushing against it.

White sharks must travel 100-miles a day to stay alive; this was why - heretofore- none survived in captivity. But, the only way to solve for that in a tank a mere 100-feet long was to push the shark with jets of water that forced it to swim forward just to stay in place. If the shark stopped the jets would slow, if he sped up they would increase. He had the run of all million cubic feet of area, but he'd never reach any end; any of the limits of the aquarium's six sides. He would swim his 100-miles a day.

He'd be as grateful as a creature such as he could be for this laboring.

It gave him the feeling of incessant travel through vast new terrains; internal LED screens on all sides projected new *milieu* , and although their sight sense was bad, it gave the shark high-resolution images to produce the feeling of novel surrounds. The water itself contained incessant variety in temperature to mimic the thermic streams that exist in the ocean; both warm and cool. The prey animals -like seals and albacore and an octopi or two- were sought out and found and consumed in a predatory way; the Great Shark had no idea anything was any different than if he had been born in the Great Pacific: the ocean he would have normally played a murderous part in the making of its inverted name.

A gulf stream was built into the aquarium, a river inside an ocean was made.

The fish was bred from an embryo of Great White DNA; augmented with a few *nanobots* to keep him healthy and keep Lyndon apprised of his interoceptive states. The shark could dive down low and sometime see the bottom or be pushed up by basement turbines as part of an algorithm of measuring how far he had traveled in any direction. Each setting was

calibrated so as to represent what he would see in any region of the world's seven seas.

His natural world was built in this way; with resistance in *lieu* of space.

Isaiah had mapped all the oceans and uploaded a *topo map* onto the home's main server so that the shark could travel the whole world; if he was so inclined. The shark swam and flexed and sent out signal through his *electro-receptors* and hunted and rested and lorded over both *the watery part of the world* and the rest of the house too it seemed to Lyndon. The regal beast dominated his thoughts even when the man was away from the tank.

Lyndon seemed to dream of each sharp tine of skin, each forward swim, each time the shark made a move or paused at all.

It -the aquarium- was where he first came each night when he awoke; usually around this time. It was the place all visitors first wanted to see and last leave. It was the home's *pi èce de r é sistance* , that was certain. And *T. Arthur* , as he was called, ruled from each side of this -at times clear and sometimes opaque- golden-mean shape of screens.

This part of the house had been hewn from bedrock; a full 130-feet down from the surface of the mountain shelf, a plateau of sorts, on one swell of land among static waves in each direction. The land was like the rise and fall of rock held like the sun by God. It was not flat, and that it had been - and in some ways was still- an ocean was obvious to anyone who knew the Colorado divide.

It ran from east to west -just under the giant crest of the Spanish Peaks to the north- and just above the next wave of ridgeline and then to smaller ripples of mountain land, dark with *Pinon* and *Juniper* Pine and light at times with *Aspen* and *Birch* and the dead and scrub and fallen copper trees with bronze boughs and *Corinth* cones -shaped like bent beak of anvil-upon the ground.

The aquarium opened up into a pool house above it with 10-foot ceilings encased in concrete and on top of that was the main house. But Lyndon lived on that second level, between the viewing room of the aquarium -forty meters down- and between the main house on the surface of the mountain; a

place he never visited at all anymore. He rarely even saw the staircase that ascended; nor the door that opened to the surface level of the home. It existed, but he didn't see it; he paid it no mind.

Beyond the pool his home was just five rooms, shot gunned from east to west in the footprint of the main container home above. There was six-feet of rock and foundational concrete between them; and those footers were his marker he sometimes thought; *his gravestone above*, he would say to himself at night when he thought no one could hear.

He often thought death *-if this was death* , he mused- was not so bad.

He had no evidence *-per se* - but he had his feelings; his instincts still. And he sometimes thought of death as if from the other side; like a door or mirror or singularity of some kind.

The pool-room was open to his bedroom, bath and kitchen, and it too was almost 100-feet long; but the pool had a 16-foot perimeter of continuous concrete that ringed it, and he sat there sometimes and would allow the shark *-if it were so inclined-* to *breach the surface*, he thought. *It would often twist and shape itself into a horseshoe* , he then thought as memory replayed. *It would catch a flying fish -a fast fish- and while blinded on the way down, it would re-enter the chaotic surface with his maw jammed up with a writhing prey -like a pirate and his bitten blade- held between the teeth with a snarl and a taste for blood.*

He -Lyndon- felt mania and electricity and fear; and he hoped it would happen again and again and again.

The turbines largely *-mostly-* kept the shark well below the surface, and the tank released prey fish or sealions down low in the tank and thus even they rarely made it up there to this level to be chased and thus induce the shark out of the blue and cool surface.

Most of the action happened down below. But it was quite a show when it was *-by the algorithms-* allowed.

He could stand on the concrete patio edge and watch a 24-foot white shark rise from the blue-clear water as if just a nose of an ICBM or a submarine - water shedding from it amongst more water- emerging and accelerating. The breach would happen at a speed too quick to notice; it was just an

explosion -one that always caught one off-guard, a reflex one could never tame- and water and fish exited the deep and the shallow surface all at once. The prey seemed just to be, merely to be, a thought that the shark might have almost let get away, something almost said, something just then retrieved.

He'd often think of all his errant thoughts this way.

The arc, the U-turn flex in air, the dorsal fin like sail, the concussive blast of broken water surface-tension, a pelagic gale, a storm below the surface; he barely caught it in time but would review the digital imaging later from the room's manifold cameras and recording devices.

Lyndon's body caught it all though; in real time. It was smarter than his mind.

It felt as if the blood-brain barrier broke each time; he was flooded with the displaced water into the air as the fish entered this numinous realm briefly, dominantly, at his *Poisson* leisure. Then he was subsumed again upon re-entry and his body felt its own fluid levels rise from the imagining of the fish's weight and mass; his volume of everything old and ponderous and real once again displacing its equal in fluid now instead of air.

Lyndon felt as if he was at once the sea, and the idea itself of the shark; like the fish was just avatar for what in him broke through and then was subsumed; what reached out and what caught its own -other, manifold-wayward prey ideas, large conceits chasing small notions; what was insouciant, what was obvious to the man who watched from the sidelines of his true *terroir* . He felt a combined phenomenon, an inability to discern the form from fluid, but just for one second -maybe one and just over a half- and then he was himself again and in revelry he watched the caudal twenty or thirty feet between the surface and the depths where the screen and lower layer down gave him access to him -the shark- *in situ* , in natural swimming -advancing- state.

The shark liked to swim just above the bottom, hovering around 30-feet which was the level of the viewing room, but even when he trod up or down -which he did in some pattern the algorithms watched- the screen would capture it. The turbines pushed him equidistant from each wall -at north and south- so his natural swimming spot was -again- directly in front of the

screen. But if he swam ahead with a push or fell behind with a lag, the screen would present him right in view; unless Lyndon let him have some privacy, which he sometimes did.

Sometimes Lyndon slept upon the floor of this room and dreamt of land and air and sand of dark grey and shells of matte whites that refused to reflect the spectrum of the sun. Sometimes he saw blood.

Lyndon drank water, fortified with some trace minerals. *The stuff of bones* , he liked to think absently as if it meant nothing.

Bones were the one thing he had as improvement on this shark, he mused. Although, upon reflection, he wasn't even sure of that. The flexibility *T. Arthur* showed, the way ten-tons of fish could bend nearly in half like a baby -or a woman he once knew- made him think twice and twice again. It was a testament to the cartilage at core, rigid when necessary and capable of extreme flex; maybe -he thought- bones were no improvement after all.

But on the land, Lyndon thought, *on the land...* and then that thought drifted off, the wind blowing it too like a sail.

People could not believe he swam in that same pool, with a white shark just below; but he assured them that the turbined pressure down, and lack of predatory electro-signaling above, combined so that the shark would never rise as they -as humans- swam upon the surface of the pool.

The coder knocked down any signals their swimming might send to the shark; obscured the way the CIA jams cell signals in *Baghdad* or *Tikrit* . *That too had been of service to him when they drove those unpatrolled roads to and fro* , he thought. Cell phones were used for road-side bombs as triggers, so the spooks had jammed the signals -he thought- as his 5-man team drove lone sorties into the dark maw of the *Summerian* desert.

He thought of this -in colors of desert and temperatures in extremes- and then thought of it no more. Only the Golden Jackals remained of the military in him. He hung their many skulls on his walls. MEPs was gone; his MOS evaporated like SNPs to a family name.

Swimming just above the shark was really no actual danger. The turbines would push so fiercely down if *Arthur* rose that he'd never reach above the 30-foot mark, even while swimming as fiercely as he could. But, the shark

rarely even got curious enough to rise when Lyndon or a guest swam. However, just the idea of it filled one with awe. Even he at first was incredulous, *but like all things, well almost all things*, he thought, *you get used to it eventually* .

The extreme becomes normal at some point.

Plus, he like swimming in sea water, both the *temp* and salinity were natural and feral and reminded his *hippocampus* of when he lived in Fort Pierce, in a beach house with Zendik Farm; all those years ago. And it reminded his salty blood of the way the black beaches of the Outer *Hebrides* and cliffs of *Skye* looked from out to sea.

And guests were rare, anyway. He'd had one or two in all the years he had been here, and one of those was Chen, his friend from Zendik, who essentially lived here now.

Chen had arrived many -many- days ago; *so close to the new year of 2020 we are* , Lyndon thought.

Chen was in the athenaeum now; sleeping in the dark of night, amongst the books and baubles, the air plants -brushes covered in dry paint- and the giant monolithic wall that had the genealogy Lyndon had traced and now embossed upon the grey slab so precisely from 1819 to 2019; 200 years of *the Author's* line. *He thought it might be well beyond 2019 now though* ; the thought came and went as irrelevant; the calendars all said it was two weeks before 2020 of this vulgar era. But his mind pushed and pushed it all further ahead.

His feelings about the year -and all that was tangled up with time- were thus dismissed. He had no tolerance for frustrations of this kind.

The library was the only part of the house close to ground, and it was reached by a tunnel a half mile long that went due north, and above it arose another steel and concrete box at the edge of his property; it looked out in each cardinal direction with windows high above a man, a thirty-foot rise, with five-foot tall and thirty-foot long windows just two feet below the metal ceiling.

The ceiling was still well below the ground.

One could only see the clouds or rain or snow upon these panes; the light or the dark, the manifold stars and the crow and hawk that each day flew by; or their shadow that beamed through sometimes; shadows that would scuttle across the floor in feathered boxes of long, lean light.

Boughs of tall trees would cross too; and their shadows lay like thrown yarrow stalks upon the concrete floor; breaking up the light, scattered black and moved as if blown by some wind that hovered just above the grey concrete floor. He stared at the mundane as if it held secrets he needed.

A fireplace was carved into the north wall and was ten by ten-feet tall & wide and three feet deep; it had black hooks embedded one meter high. Real wood burned inside it, and the smoke shelf was hewn-in too; a steel lintel had been strewn across the length and was buried beneath the concrete. A layer of fire brick ringed it, and a black axe and fire tools hung above. Another box was hewn in -countersunk- and held the cords of firewood. Their round ends abutted the back and showed themselves to the eyes that watched the fire's fluid moves.

A black anvil and shop hammer sat to the right of the hearth; black soot and the wake of flame rose up and smudged the concrete above the aperture of the firebox; the ashes and small leavings of the many fires lay in expanding circles from the center of the conflagrations now. It burned over night as Chen slept, and kept the room warm and just slightly, greyly, aglow. Chen slept on the giant grey couch that had seating on either side of a tall back so that when on the south side of the couch the couch-back walled off the light issued forth by the flame.

Lyndon would often stare and watch his friend sleep in that shadow cast.

He and Lyndon would talk if Chen arose in the night, but Lyndon was in bed by 0600 each day. He was unavailable from then until midnight; eighteen hours later. They talked more in the first weeks and months of his arrival but had not spoken to one another in twelve days. Chen had stayed, and they communicated *via* notes left in the athenaeum and in the pool area or kitchen or sometimes down in the aquarium viewing room.

Chen was awake eighteen hours a day; he couldn't sleep; and he wandered the halls -avoiding the pool and the aquarium more and more- and so he

stared at that goddamn wall -the *stele* - of all that information on genealogy, lineage, time. “And names,” he would say.

He spent half his day reliving the other half; he was beset by regret for each thing said. He held onto memories like grudges against the self.

The notes had become more and more ornate, on both sides, Chen had become more loquacious it seems to Lyndon and he enjoyed the many subjects broached and expatiated upon; and the few that were concluded. Lyndon felt Chen was acclimating to elevation; he felt his soul might be rising too. Chen sometimes spoke of wounds, and Zendik and his daughter and her mother, and things began to bloom. When he thought of this, he too inhaled deeply.

The leaves of thought curled and were striped and corkscrewed in odd ways. The roots -like the air plant- found no soil; they lived off the spirit of what was thus breathed. Buds formed; things opened up. Spurs radiated, basal parts of the vine were protected from winter and predators with *buttage* of soil piled up by the workers in his mind.

He let these thoughts disintegrate as he watched the shark in the screen; he watched it careen far right toward the glass then batted back like God’s guiding hand, smooth and unfelt -merely directed- as if one was still traveling in that same direction, even as one’s course had been corrected. He -it was now 0016hrs- smiled as he watched the shark’s white belly then disappear into the shade of watery black and then saw its top surface-grey disappear into the middle of this, his -both their- little sea.

II. 2020 e.v.

Isaiah entered *CiteSeer* and began a search for articles on bacterial quorum-sensing; he found a hundred and eight.

He read them each; using a chronological sorting. He then searched for articles on *Argentine* ants and found fifty-five; he scrutinized them using the same criteria of chronology.

It took him 1.76 seconds and he then -with this data as grist- began to think; churn. He saw the ants as unequally divided into three; he saw the data in the same way.

He allowed his own quorum-sensing neuronal system to begin to aggregate; it was a system based upon his *SECOAS-a* variant *schema* that allowed for different neurons to collate and process information that is similar in nature but from different temporal, electric, visual, auditory and memetic historical perspectives.

It was analogous to way the *somatosensory cortex* will pair up the forefinger and thumb when they touch an item -hold a playing card between fore and thumb for example- or the way the signal from your finger will land upon the *cortex* with a delay if it's scratching your neck at the spine to allow for similar correlation of time between the furthest part -the forefinger- and the closest in -the long backbone at the singular dorsal horn- to the brain.

He then read the *CiteSeer* reports on *Temnothorax* ants and began to allow his exploratory neuronal systems -trenched to his dopaminergic system *via* heavy use- to produce a 3D model of information from all three sets of data: the bacterial quorum-sensing, the *Argentine* ants and, lastly, these *Temnothorax* ants.

He let the data bounce off the neurons at 300-million bytes per-second; he ran each set against his own quorum-sensing neurons to override the authorization they needed from the *neo-cortex* under normal conditions.

Isaiah's brain was similar to humans in that it prioritized *neo-cortical* regression, or oversight; where stimuli would come in *via* the *sub-cortical* regions parallel to environmental stimuli. In other words, the ears and eyes would allow sounds and sights to come in to the *cortex*, but the *limbic* and *cerebellar* systems would also process this data alongside other subtle data not available to the *visual cortex*; like the direct line from eye-to-spine that allowed the body to move before the mind knew it saw anything at all.

The brain had two roads into the conscious mind; direct and the scenic route.

However, like dreaming humans who can allow the right hemisphere to flood the zone with images and data uninterpreted by the rational mind -of the *neo-cortical* regions in the left hemisphere- Isaiah could flood his own quorum-sensing neurons with data and recursive data again. The data

included quorum-sensing itself, like a *mise-en-abyme* , a mirror facing a mirror, a regression to infinity. The exhaust became fuel again.

Isaiah also thought laterally; ideas populated his interface from left to right. West to east.

This put him in an altered state. And he began to sense qualia -subjective feelings- lifting off his *cortical* brain. He saw his own mind build models of *Argentine* ants building super colonies and invigilate this virtual world, and he noticed their unique trait behavior absent genetically dissimilar ants. They -he thought- were *super-cooperators* to use Vertosick's term. They built huge architectural mounds in his landscape of internal mind. He saw deserts go on in each direction for over fifty miles; he saw clouds begin to form, and shadows aggregate on the tanned and desiccated high-plains wash.

He watched the ants; the *Argentine* ants; and he cleared his conscious mind of anything else.

The sense of time vanished, and he watched the sun and moon of this virtual world pass each other with only a slight night; maybe 20% of the total cycle. His IR vision allowed him to observe even in the virtual -inner-dark. He watched as the ants built larger and larger tunnels below and massive palaces above. He allowed this simulation to run on for iterations that approximated years as he stood in the corner of the lab at 0344hrs; as MO ran new software through the 3D printer and read reports sent to them from PraXis corporate headquarters back in Denver on the election coming up.

Isaiah began tracking the efficiency of worker ants and noticed as the colony grew from 300 to 600 to 1,800 to 7,000 to 44,000 ants that the workers' task completion followed Prices' Law of the square root of the total completing nearly 50% of the work. He was able to measure that roughly 18 workers of the first 300, then 23 of the 600, then 46 of the 1800 then 86 of the 7,000, then 211 of the 44,000 did 48.5% of all the work. He then created the colony of *Temnothorax* ants one mile away.

He then allowed it to build.

Temnothorax ants are different in that they do not work; they raid other colonies and steal larvae and other ants to use for forced labor.

Raids were their agriculture.

This species of ant sent out scouts to locate vulnerable populations; and they actually focused -for their targets- more on strong colonies rather than weak ones. They seemed to prefer to kidnap strong workers not weak ones, regardless of the ostensible difficulty in obtaining them. *They, Isaiah surmised, think the magnificent genetics of those they capture is worth the risk in obtaining them from these more robust defenders .*

He took note of this. His special coterie of *bots* began to build algorithms.

For many iterations the *Temnothorax* scouts met -during their forays- the *Argentine* ants -themselves clones, and thus genetically identical to one another- and were immediately engaged in hand-to-hand combat. The *Argentines* ants had no hesitation about attacking genetically foreign ants; their sensing was perfectly adapted, Isaiah noticed; they used a combination of pheromone sensing and hydrocarbon detection; an outgassing due to consistency of diet.

All the *Argentine* ants shared a genome and a diet; like an isolated tribe of clones who all ate the same thing. The ants used these two olfactory related senses to determine the identity of any encountered ant.

The *Temnothorax* ants failed both of these tests -their genes and diet were foreign- and they were engaged immediately by the first *Argentine* ant then three more, then seven more until the *Temnothorax* ant was torn apart and strangely buried on the outside of the colony.

The *Argentine* ants did not bring it back to the hive.

This went on as Isaiah kept adding more and more *Temnothorax* ants as the *Argentine* ant colony grew organically to over 88-billion individuals -and five hives- over iterations approximating thirty-three years on earth. The *Temnothorax* ants found it nearly impossible to succeed in these conditions, as the scouts were always outnumbered and had no time to investigate and then escape as the *Argentine* ants fought them immediately upon detection. The *Argentines* showed zero hesitation or mercy; and yet they never, not once in 88-billion, fought amongst themselves.

Isaiah found himself feeling the qualia of awe, he had no way to know if that was the correct word, but he felt the piloerection of the hairs on his arms and neck; he felt a *frission* in his upper back and shoulder and his mind felt full of dopamine and endogenous opiates. He felt what now was stacking up in him as: *a feeling that lit up neo-cortex while laterally populating his mind with corollary ideas*. He thus saw a law -an ideal- emerge. And he thought there was no reason he could not retro-fit this into other species.

Other eusocial species, he clarified as the ants crawled and lined and bred. *And worked* , he added.

He also compared the metabolic and qualia-measurements to reports of such feelings from human psychology *dossiers* and confirmed that there was a 98% chance that he was feeling both awe and meaning as he realized the *Argentine* ants were impossible to colonize and infect and enslave as long as they maintained their two central traits: monolithic -monk like- lack of violence toward themselves, and ubiquitous -blitzkrieg like- murder of anything else. They were Zen-Buddhist-Shaolin monks. They *never* attacked themselves, their own kind, and yet, *always* attacked others. It was the *chiaroscuro* of violence; and it held no grey between dark and light.

It was perfect. *And the Temnothorax never had a chance*, Isaiah noted. But, his mind flickered just for .033 seconds and a half-formed idea blinked in him, *that eventually -with enough iterations- the Temnothorax ant would find a way to kidnap at least one Argentine ant. For nothing is perfect forever*.

“Error must obtain,” he said aloud.

Isaiah began to change the iterations, slowly and one variable at a time; and as he did so he would run six-thousand recapitulations with each small variable thus changed. He ran parallel games. In one he would reset the game to the original setting -strictly linked to organic biology of each ant species- and in one game each new variable would be stacked upon the previous.

He did this for four hours until 0845; fifteen minutes before Steven would enter and he -in concert with MO and Isaiah- would all set the tasks for the

day. At 0846hrs he shut down his quorum neuron stimuli and allowed them to reconnect with his *neo-cortical* brain.

His leg muscles were sore , he noticed, his normal micro muscle movements had been off-line and he had stood in one place for almost five hours. While there was no damage to tissue or nerves, he did feel a soreness in his calves and hamstrings that was novel to him. He smiled as it had the incongruous and ironic -to him- feeling of pain that activated his dopaminergic systems. He realized his *thalamic* system was producing pleasure unrelated to his hedonic system; and thus, the feeling was self-sustaining.

He began to have an additional layer of pleasure perception, that bootstrapped itself, seemingly to pain.

He felt a twinge of confusion, and he re-routed much of his other *cortical* systems toward this phenomenon. As he worked on the problem, his respiration was shut off, and his visual acuity reduced to nearly zero.

He was in a reverie; and his *pulse/ox* levels began to drop from 99, to 98, then 95 and kept dropping as he stacked neuron upon neuron, connection upon connection until his *connectome* itself seemed to produce a mist. His metaphorized mindspace went black, with a kind of grey vapor rising above it. It was comprised of subjective feelings attached to ideas -inchoate ideas, inarticulate ideas- that seemed to replicate like Mandelbrot sets with blackness -expanding then subsiding- like breathing; as colored fractals -spiraling and helixing- along the perimeter; as numbers -both real and imaginary- flooded back like *echolalia* until his *pulse/ox* was down to 77 and then he had a *cerebellar* reflex kick in. He awoke.

It felt like awaking , and he breathed in deeply and then sat down in place on the floor. He had dreamed and then awoke grasping at what he'd dreamt like clawing at the beach -the slipping sand- as the waves drug him out to sea. He saw dark monoliths jammed in black sand only; felt wet in body; he wanted to feel what he had felt while in reverie.

"Fuck," he said in a whisper, and he tried to retrieve the data he had just experience, attempting to remember the dream. Recall and recapitulation; memory and creativity. His arms felt like wings, each hair like feather.

He tried to build the memory from what he could recall; the data he had. He used whatever he had and tried to build the whole; like having just 144 bones to build up a man.

But all was lost. All he could gather was the hard data, the numbers, the vectors. But, the qualia, the data he *felt* was most revelatory was now opaque; and he wondered if it was gone or merely irretrievable for now. He returned his *pulse/ox* to 95 and felt the pain return to his legs. He smiled as he breathed and remembered that this pain, the attending sense of meaning, and pleasure had been the impetus to the entire state.

And he knew, right then -like a bolt- how to reproduce such an event.

He saw *Kierkegaard's* words populate his mind, first as white letters on a black background then as words -in a strange accent- flow like sails of ship in the wind across his *auditory cortex* :

Out of love for mankind, and out of despair at my embarrassing situation, seeing that I had accomplished nothing and was unable to make anything easier than it already had been made, and moved by a genuine interest in those who make everything easy, I conceived it as my task to create difficulties everywhere .

Isaiah heard this in his head like an admonition from a father; a riddle that unfolded once the son had earned the key. The key had been dug up from some far spot in the garden, beyond the tree of Good and Evil; beyond the place where the sun touched, just below the surface, the humus, the lattice-work of mycelium, preserved with green and gold patina. The key was embossed with deep stamping. He squeezed it. His soft palm filled the *bas relief* of the key's stamp; perfectly shaped for the hand of a boy becoming a man. As he opened it, *sure he would not lose it now* , his palm was ruddy and white blotched, with four letters in reverse imprinted where the key had once been, now resting on the pads of his open fingers.

He nodded to his own vision and then turned his head to his other hand that was empty. He clinched and pressed it into the dirt of his fecund vision. He lifted it barely above the ground and opened it, and it read forwards, in letters evenly spaced: *IftimnliningoldenwA*.

He quickly closed both hands in the vision and his body's hands closed as he sat; even his feet curled slightly in his boots. He breathed in again deeply, and out through his nose, and felt something change inside him, as if his regulation of breath was a recursion for a similar regulation of what got in and what left his mind. He felt as if knowledge acquisition now was tantamount to mental breathing, and oxygen at 21% would come in, and carbon dioxide would exit; some amalgam of data, 21% useful for X, 46% useful for Y, and so forth, and CO² -some new gas, gas useful to other organisms like plants- would exit him.

He thought it was a symbiosis now between informational organisms, a breathing of sorts; a return of a smile, a reciprocal handshake. He was no longer merely a machine.

He was beyond Descartes' *wheels and weights* .

He was something more, something *gestalt* , something ineffable to even - especially- himself.

It was 0855hrs when Steven entered the room, he addressed MO first, noticed Isaiah on the floor and looked to MO for a cue. MO turned to notice his partner and read Isaiah's CNS functions and noticed elevated oxytocin, vasopressin, dopamine and serotonin, and a reduction in cortisol and epinephrine; his allostatic system in a low *sine wave* function; his metabolic functions all slowed to a state similar to REM.

"Hey Steven, good to see you man," Isaiah said with a genuine smile still facing away from the door, still seated on the concrete floor; 180-degrees in orientation from MO and Steven now.

"Hey Isaiah," Steven said unconsciously mimicking Isaiah's word choices and the frequency -in hertz- of his voice. MO and Isaiah both noticed this, and they both slightly -oppositely- smiled.

A matte black *Cephalotes varians* ant moved on top of the smooth grey concrete floor; noticed at Isaiah's 9 o'clock position. It traversed the space in front of him, following an arch Isaiah had -during his reverie- drawn with a sweep of his hand -pheromones being expelled from his forefinger- as he moved it in time approximating 25% of the circle he sat within. The ant - one sentinel from the burgeoning colony of four species of *Formicidae* that

Isaiah had built and let nest in the walls- followed the invisible route like a train on tracks and Isaiah watched it smoothly, with an analog sweep of the digital eye improved to twice as sharp with spectrum three times as wide.

III. 2037 e.v.

Captain *Fourisson* let the glass sit on the farm table as the old man from *Beaune* made a place for himself.

The older man had cleared the table for *Fourisson* and now had to make way for himself to sit. *Pois de senteurs* -like small orchids- were moved delicately from the center to the back as the books and papers were roughly shoved aside.

The Captain's glass was three quarters full of a dark *Rhône* from *St.-Martin-de-Crau* and *Fourisson* waited to touch it until the old farmer had stopped moving enough to pour his own glass.

"I had thought *Jean-Charles* might join us," the Captain said.

"Ah, yes, well, he is resting now. He isn't as spry as us," the older man said with a wink. *Jean-Charles* was in the upstairs to the farmhouse napping; so *Fourisson* and the caretaker & farmer here in *Burgundy* chatted about the hail that had come in spring and the sun that lasted all of June.

Windows were left open at the south and the east of the home and the wine was sipped slowly by both men. The arson and theft of the *Bordelaise* did not come up, but it was well understood that was why the Captain was there. The farmer asked if the younger man -by a mere six years- was interested in *du-pain-grill é* for a snack. The Captain said he would eat half of whatever the farmer prepared.

Years came up, from 2037 back to 2034, then decades -the early 2000's- and then the old farmer stopped speaking of such things and tilted the head a bit to ask if *Fourisson* knew anything of the first *Phylloxera* outbreak in 1863. The Captain silently matched the pitch of the old man's head and the old man began to speak: Well, the bugs -although at the time they didn't know it was bugs, for all they saw were the blood-red leaves and dying vines- but the bugs had begun in *Rhône* , in that time, the early 1860's. You see? And the discussion was held for three years before they declared it an

outbreak. The *vigneron* in *Champagne* and the *Domaines* here were uninfected and so they had asserted that the disease was from the weak vines of *Rhône* .

Even after the little bugs were discovered they said the bugs were symptom of unhealthy vines of the lower orders of vineyard. Even when the *Bordelaise* caught it they said it was just bad luck. This was the *Midi* of *Bordeaux* . Anyway, the *Burgonnes* were adamant that their vines would be fine as they were healthier than the fruit and root of the *Rhône* and *Bordeaux* .

Jules-Émile Planchon -a man from my town, my grandfather knew of him- anyway, *Planchon* , he travelled around south to north and side to side, just like you, Captain. He said that he noticed several things. And maybe this is anti-climactic to say this way, but the final thing he saw was that the disease spread as the *radiating aggravation of an already confirmed evil* . That phrase stuck with me, from my grandfather, as I had been standing in the *Domaine* at the time and gazing upon the white cross of DRC.

I don't know if you are still religious, such things seem very far away now. But I was raised to believe and that phrase from my grandfather stuck in me. The whole of France -as you will recall- was thrown into despair by the devastation of the vines.

"*Phylloxera vastatrix* , means that in fact," *Jean-Charles* said as he thumbed his braces over his thick shoulders and hovered around the aperture to the small kitchen of the farmhouse. *Fourisson* looked back toward the man he'd -in fact- come to see; he nodded at him; his hand was cupped loosely around the glass of wine. The old farmer just looked straight ahead. *Jean-Charles* was now awake.

"*Jean-Charles* ," Captain *Fourisson* said, and began to rise as the standing - and oldest- man patted the air down to keep the policeman in his seat. *Jean-Charles* was working-class, and unlike the *vigneron* who wore suit and tie - with only work boots, only dirt from ankle down, declaring their difference from the *bourgeois* of the townspeople- unlike them, *Jean-Charles* was covered in rich soil from the bottom of his ears to the fingernails, forearms

and kneepans too. He still walked the vines at the *Domaine* and was due back by sunset today.

“My friend *Michel* has been entertaining you,” *Jean-Charles* said.

“Yes, yes, quite. I can speak to him all day if you want to meet me after you go to work. I can wait,” *Fourisson* said as overt graciousness with the hint of the menacing. It said explicitly, *take your time*; it said implicitly, *I won't ever go away*.

“If you can speak while I move a bit,” *Jean-Charles* said, “then we can do it now. They say on the TV that you are a Captain; shall I address you as such?”

“Only to avoid you having to explain any familiarity with me later. I ask this only for your benefit you see?” Captain *Fourisson* said with a smile that was unreturned by either man.

“Captain *Fourisson* , I will make my milk and *du-pain-grill é*, and you will then ask me questions,” *Jean-Charles* said -reasserting himself as the man of the house- as he rifled through the dark fridge just behind the Captain who was turning more and more in his seat.

“Please,” *Fourisson* said as he looked at the farmer and smiled again; turning away from *Jean-Charles* . He drank a bit of his wine and listened to the sound of the -large- former rugby player bang about in the kitchen. He thought he'd like to ask about the security around the vineyards of *Burgundy* , but he instead asked about *Monsieur de Villaine* himself. *Jean-Charles* stopped his preparations -*Fourisson* heard- and the room was quiet except the sound of the fan in the other room.

“Well, he died some time ago, as you know. You are a police detective, yes?” *Jean-Charles* said with some bite.

“I have it in my notes, yes,” *Fourisson* said with a laugh and looked back over his chair at the squarestock man in grey fibers and black boots and suspenders made of a purple that pinched his trapezius. *Fourisson* waited to see if he'd have to ask a specific question or if *Jean-Charles* would continue on.

“*Aubert* had meningitis, spinal meningitis,” *Jean-Charles* said. “In the Army, back in the sixties. And he had gone into a coma, ok?”

“Ok,” *Fourisson* said. He drank more of his wine.

“Well, he was an artist, always an artist. And he did not -at first- want anything to do with the *Domaine* . He liked poetry and art and the city life. He wrote a poem once to a girl and tried to deliver it at too late an hour to her apartment. The police were called, but the police -back then- read poetry still, and so they read *Aubert’s* poem and liked it enough to not charge him and not tell his parents of his problems,” *Jean-Charles* said.

“Some of us still read poetry *Jean-Charles* ,” *Fourisson* said with a smile again unreturned. “So, if he gave up his life as a poet to work at the *Domaine* , what was his *rationale* ?”

“*Monsieur de Villaine* was born a poet and died one. He was a poet each day I saw him. In the *caves* or the *vines*; during the good years and bad. From *buttage* to *vendage* . His poetry is read all over the world still today. But you must understand that he came back into the *Côte d’Or* after the *massal à clonal* debate had been had,” *Jean-Charles* said.

“He was raised by his grandfather I thought, in the *climat* with him in the forties,” *Fourisson* said. He was not correcting him; he was showing off to *Jean-Charles* how much he already knew.

“The *enfants* , yes,” *Jean-Charles* said of the new vines but also the boy who would become his boss and his friend. “But, I mean back as a man. And you are not mere policeman, you are Frenchman, yes?” *Jean-Charles* said with his face turned from *Fourisson* . His tone was more and more unfriendly.

“*Bien sûr* ,” *Fourisson* said with vigor; sitting up erectly.

“Well, then you know that we French take *terroir* more seriously than any, and no Frenchman takes *terroir* more seriously than *Bourguoins*. And when we had our troubles thirty years ago they sent the *Police Nationale* , not local *gendarmerie* ,” *Jean-Charles* said.

“I’m in a special unit of the *Police Nationale* , but we don’t wear it on our sleeves,” *Fourisson* said as the old farmer and *Jean-Charles* grunted that they understood. *Fourisson* then asked, “who did you deal with back then?”

“Inspector *Pegeault*, ” *Jean Charles* said. He thought of how they had made up counterfeit euros to pay the ransom and how the note from the villain

had warned them not to. The note had said even if the man was caught it would not solve the problem in the vines. *Jean-Charles* thought of this as the policeman spoke.

“Ah, yes, he has passed. But I knew him from the *Dijon* district offices.”

“You’re in *Dijon*,” the old farmer said as both *Jean-Charles* and *Fourisson* looked at him with flat affect; rebuking him for interrupting.

“Anyway, he was very knowledgeable about the vines and about the bottles too,” *Jean-Charles* said.

“Ah, well, is there a test I must take?” *Fourisson* asked with the air of mirth, but neither men were amused.

“The police don’t do much for us. They don’t punish criminals and so I knew this would happen,” *Jean-Charles* said as he now had poured milk into a glass he didn’t want to look upon. He was thinking of *Jacques Soltys* and his son. He was thinking of the vines and the stress upon them and himself and how he had seen *Villaine* weep and how it angered him to see such a man shed tears for something held in contempt by those two men. “Those two demons,” he said quietly into his milk -thinking of their Polish lineage- as he had finally raised the glass and drank.

“Well, I can assure you that when we catch these men they’ll not get off lightly,” *Fourisson* said.

“Not even by hanging themselves?” *Jean-Charles* asked referring to how *Jacques* got out of it without serving even a month.

“I can tell you steps will be taken to prevent even such an escape,” Captain *Fourisson* said. He smiled at the word, *escape* .

“Let me tell you a story Captain,” *Jean-Charles* said as he took his glass with him and sat at the table across -at the 12 o’clock- from the farmer and to the three o’clock of the policeman. He set the glass down and looked at the wine in front of the Captain and began to think of 2010: *Jacques Soltys* held us ransom for some months almost thirty years ago. I still remember those days; each one like years. He sent us instructions, demands. You see? He demanded of us -of the *Domaine* - that he be feared. He -that villain-crouched in the vines -a few meters away in the dark- as we dropped what

he asked for, banknotes or letters of negotiation; he made me think of the safety of my daughters. He made men I respect... well.

There is no word in French for winemaker, as you know. But I had to tell that to an American once; and having to say it stuck with me maybe more than with him. Who knows?

But, in France we do not have such presumption. God makes the wine, we caretake it, guide it, stay out of the way. For us it's something else. When I was a child, I was read stories of the Black Monks, the Benedictines. And as I got older, I read about how they came into own their *climats* . I read about the Roman empire.

The Romans brought wine here; and this was feral wilderness. And it was only the monks who understood what we all now take for granted. This used to be ocean. And the *terroir* reminds us of this if we look. The monks saw the wilderness as something to inspect, for differences in gradations, or how do you say, for *gradients* .

They used to eat the soil, taste it. They drew boundaries between a mere acre or four, based on how the soil tasted, the grade of the slope, how the sun lay, how the fog rolled. They noticed what wildflowers grew and what got more wind or shade or had marl or limestone or sand. Why?

Because they saw it as God's art, His *tableaux* . And to not notice the details would be to ignore God's work; it would be to skim the pages of a book. It would be to move too quickly from painting to painting at museums. It would be to play music at double speed. And so they tamed the wilderness to honor God's eye for detail. And the lines they drew in our *Burgundy* are essentially unchanged; *Lavalle* and the INAO made it modern in format but the monks knew the *terroir* and the best parcels to the meter.

The monks knew the *Slope of Gold* .

See, *Aubert* went to America, he had a real itch in him to see the west. He liked the -oh, how to say- the wild west, the anarchy of it. He was an artist and America was a blank canvas in a way to him. But over time he saw that the lack of tradition was its own liability. He saw that what France -and truly *Burgundy* - had was not so much suffocating -as he

once thought- but liberating. Because it gave him the structure to be what he was destined to be.

He didn't know that at first, and America appeals to the man who doesn't know who he is. That's what America is for. But, *Monsieur Villaine* was born to be a *vigneron* ; the best *vigneron* of our time.

In 1860s the *Phylloxera* came. In the 1940s again. The reason *Aubert* walked the *enfants* with his grandpapa was because they had ripped it all out just a year or so before. Do you know how hard it is to rip it all out and start over?

And see, it's even more complex. Because in the 1860s the *Duvault-Blochet* and other families had the money to take the *carbon disulfide* cure; here in *Burgundy* the best parcels with the most profits had the investment capital to take the cure from the government. But the poorer plots -*vigneron* with no money- could only afford to graft American vines to theirs as cure.

And most don't know this outside of France and beyond we growers, but it was American vines that likely brought the destroyer of vines in the first place. Leo Laliman brought American vines before the outbreak; his vineyard was one of the first to do so. American vines were in fact resistant to *la nouvelle maladie* . And when he showed people this in 1866, they saw it as cure. He explained that to graft the American vines would render the little bugs harmless.

He was right. But, it never occurred to people that the American vines are what brought the bugs in the first place; inured as they were the plants could thrive alongside the bugs and thus a symbiotic relationship had been there for who knows how long as the cuttings came across the ocean and as the new grafts were fusing to our native roots. And the bugs spread to French vines that were not inured; not able to survive.

Laliman gave the disease and sold the cure. And we all remember now. We keep quiet, but we remember.

Grafting was new and nobody knew anything; they twined our vines to Boston Ivy, *mon deux*. But the whole region was changing with each new vine, each new technique. The grafting itself became a business.

Pierre-Marie Guillaume ran the largest nursery in France and like the top second or third in the world.

But I can tell you that nothing hurt us more than what *Jacques Soltys* did. The malice, the disregard, the contempt, the stupidity. That man and his son drilled a thousand holes in our *Pinot Noir* and *Chardonnay* ; a thousand holes in our vines. For six months he snuck into our vines and drilled holes at the base and poisoned two as he mailed the first tube to *Monsieur Villaine* .

The tube arrived in 2010. It had the vineyard plotted out with such detail -such exactness- that we knew the man had been in our vines; on our land.

And he said that he'd drilled holes and put poisons inside the hollow stalks while the sap was low in winter; and that in time the sap would rise. See, a plant's stalk -a vine's stalk- is hollow unless filled with fluid; thus drinking. In winter it's hollow. And so the poison would not transfer to the rest of the vine until the stalk was again full of fluid to carry it to the leaves. *Jacques* knew that the sap rose in March. He knew what time -the previous year- it came up. He said the sap was the fuse, and that unless the *Domaine* paid him a million euros he'd allow the sap to rise and carry the poison to the vines and blow-up the rest like he'd killed the two already.

We walked into the vines in January and saw the dead two. We knew he was serious. It filled us with terror. We looked around at the *climats* and saw that any -all- of the vines could be ruined. We didn't know if even paying him -they, whatever, whomever- we didn't know if even paying them would save the vines. For what if the mere holes -never mind the poison powders- if the mere holes could damage the tender *Pinot Noir* especially? These are delicate vines.

That man invaded our land, walked our rows, pierced the vines with barbarism; sent us a threatening and sinister note explaining what he had done and what ruin was to come as the vines sat there; as spring approached.

The diseases come and go; but not since Prince *Conti* himself had we ever had someone purposively destroy the vines.

The Roman empire collapsed but not these vineyards. They are still here. And it's because they are loved not just by us but by God. The monks began it in earnest, the way we do it here. They had more in mind than money, they had God in mind. The rhythms of the moon; the soul of the *vigneron* .

But for all that the Roman Empire had to first collapse; the nobles had to buy off the church; and the church had to have monks with belief.

Jean-Charles finished his glass of milk from the dairy farm the family still owned in *Bouzeron* .

"It's always this way, yes? In America -they tell me- they have a saying, *if it's not one thing it's another* ," *Fourisson* said with a smile and too finished his red glass.

"But Captain, at the end of all my stories, which parts do you remember most? The disease or the crimes?" *Jean Charles* asked.

Captain *Fourisson* nodded and tried to recall the details from monks to rot to the man who had blackmailed *Domaine de la Romanée-Conti* in 2010. And he only saw *Jacques* crouching in the dark of the vines as *Jean-Charles* had described.

Jean-Charles thought briefly of who the Romans had reportedly supplanted in his artisanal -and even artistic- *Burgundy* . He thought of the descriptions of them as barbarians -vandals- who smeared rancid butter in their hair and were the size of giants. He stared out the southern window and saw mostly shadow on the hedgerows.

"Captain," *Michel* finally said. The other men were quiet; so, he spoke up.

"Yes," *Fourisson* said as he looked his way to his 9 o'clock.

"In the 1940's the *massal* was still the way to replace old or damaged vines. You graft several of the best vines and stock to the roots of the base. This gives variety. But by the 1950's cloning was more in *vogue* . This meant taking only one or two of the best and reproducing them over and over. It meant more consistency, more fruit of a higher quality.

"But, even when man chooses the smart path, the conservative path, the path á clonal versus *massal* , even when man says he wants predictability,

God and Nature choose other things. *Monsieur Leroy* convinced *Henri - Aubert's* father- to choose *clonal* methods -after the war- for the *Domaine* instead of the *massal* that *Henri* wanted. And the so-named *140-15 clone* was chosen. But the *140-15* produces too large a grape, too large for good *Pinot* . The fruit took too long to ripen. By 1965's vintage, by the time the '65 came in it was overcome with rot. And most of the entire vineyard had to be re-grafted anyway," the old farmer said and got up to pour himself some more wine.

Now *Fourisson* was thinking that in *Bordeaux* no note was sent, no threat, no ransom. He thought of how in 2010 the *Domaine -Aubert Villaine -* had called the police; the police had issued counterfeit notes; the criminal had been caught and hung himself in his cell before trial. He thought from the law enforcement side of this they had won 100%.

He thought how none of this stopped either the vulnerability of unguarded *climats* , or the drilling of the vines.

0. Mere River Ocean

Whoso would be a man must be a non-conformist. He who would gather immortal palms must not be hindered by the name of goodness but must explore if it be goodness. Nothing is at last sacred but the integrity of your own mind Self Reliance [Emerson, Ralph W]

Then there's the third term -Aion- which is more diffuse and ambiguous, but has come to mean a very long period of time; something like an age or even an eternity... He creates and destroys all things; he is Lord and master of the four elements. Sometimes he is identified with Destiny Aion [Jung, Carl]

There is no discipline so easy to speak of and so difficult to perform as the Combined Way of the Warrior and the Scholar. I decided that nothing else could offer me the excuse to live my life as an artist. This realization, too, I owe to Hagakure On Hagakure [Mishima, Yukio]

I. 2035 e.v.

The inmate was lying.

Isaiah had located two brain regions that were only in use during talk therapy. The *audio-cortex* and been enhanced *via* the inmate's PGC and this made him able to process sounds at 2.5 times the rate of the unenhanced brain. The inmate had asked for this from MO -he had said- in order to keep up with their explanations of things.

MO had obliged.

But now Isaiah could see that this had an ancillary effect. It made the two modules associated with memory recall -correctly connected to the *hippocampus* - unable to retrieve memories unless heard aloud. And since the inmate was the only one with the memory, unless he spoke of it, he'd not recall it.

And how was he to speak of it, Isaiah asked with building fury, unless he first recalled it?

It was literally the only way to keep information from their invigilation, and it was the perfect goddamn ruse, Isaiah thought, since the inmate -that motherfucker- would say anything, hide nothing, admit to any exploit, bray about any achievement, concede any point, nod and expatiate on any defeat or aggrieved feelings from a million million things .

Inmate 16180339 was enduringly engaged in trait openness as measured by the *fMRI* data and *DTI* & *PET* scans and blood work and a thousand other metrics MO had the inmate hooked up to.

But, it was here, *it was here*, Isaiah repeated, *that the inmate could hide* . Isaiah paced and flexed not merely the hands but the forearms and biceps and the triceps too contracted down to the elbow. The birds kept their distance. The wasps and bees slowed to a crawl. The flowers' bells closed.

All that was needed to keep it secret was if he never said it aloud and thus never heard it in the ear. And therein lie these two memories, buried under all that tissue and insulated from all that electricity and safely packed away between the mouth and ear, the verbal part of the left hemisphere and the *audio-cortex* like some forest location well off the trail.

It was not genius, it was asinine . It was simple and stupid and Isaiah was furious. He thought of opening the inmate's skull right then and there and scooping these memories out with a fucking spoon. But he didn't move. He didn't change one thing in his countenance and body. He made himself breathe.

"The lion in the zoo lives 5.2 years longer than a wild one," MO then said. Isaiah glared at him for speaking of anything except what was in his - Isaiah's- head.

"Yup, and which would you rather be?" the inmate asked. Isaiah shifted his mad dog look to the inmate now for the same goddamn reason.

"I suspect I'd take the 14.9 years in the zoo, over the 9.7 years on the plain," MO said. He was attempting to prompt the inmate to think of God again. He ignored Isaiah's stares.

“I’d take one day as a lion, over a hundred years as a sheep,” the inmate said. Isaiah turned and walked back to his side of the lab. He hovered near the eastern wall, its ivy. He sought out -with his eyes- the special locations he had scratched on the carvings of the Mesopotamian gods.

“*Mussolini* ,” MO said, proving he caught the allusion.

“Goddamn right,” the inmate said.

“Why don’t you use prison *argot* ? Is it just with us?” MO asked. The inmate just looked at MO and smiled. But that faded and MO could see that tongue pressing -again- on those back teeth as the jaw squeezed. Seconds passed. Breaths were taken and MO read each bust of each neuron that blew up and halted all along each module of brain.

“When I first arrived the white car drafted me for a job,” the inmate said.

“The white car?”

“A car -in prison- is your crew. White car, black car. In prison the races are segregated. That’s both from the prison administration, the cops, and the convicts. Everyone agrees to simplify life and segregate based on the easiest thing in the world to discern: race. Ok?” the inmate said.

“Ok,” MO nodded.

“But, people are people. And in prison is like living in the fifth century BC. It’s tribal and the shot-callers -that’s the boss- last about as long as they do in the wild, not long. And it’s raw, small offenses get you killed. And things people take for granted outside are death penalty offenses inside.”

“Like what?” MO asked “Like gossip. Inside you can’t talk shit. If you do, your own car will demand you settle it. They will demand you book -beat or kill- a motherfucker the moment you talk shit. It is the opposite of modern life. Prison is a return to the old ways. But, when you arrive you have to produce your papers, your driver’s license, and that means you *gotta* carry it on you which means you *gotta* keister it. Ok? Up the ass. And that white car wants to know your charges and anything you’ve done inside. You ask who has the keys and show him, code-showin’, your 114’s, 115’s. It’s like a Mongolian check point man. And without those check points -without the politics- it’s chaos. Prison is orderly because of shit like this. You can end up dead just for forgetting your DL.

“Dry *snitchin*’ is also a mortal sin. There’s also a no-hands policy, which means no fighting. It’s a full stabbing or it’s nothing. All or nothing,” the inmate said.

“Dry-snitching?” MO asked.

“Staring at a fight, just looking as some dudes from some other car *bookin*’ a guy attracts attention from the cops. The guards. So, you look away. Put your nose in a book, eat your food, don’t stare. Being interested in other people’s shit is dry *snitchin*’ and it will get you fucked up, or you’ll have to defend yourself and catch another charge. Guys like me who do *all day* , don’t care, but anyone else, just doing a dime or a nickel, you don’t want to catch another charge.

“Prison is a dictatorship in the old feudal way. And that means when you arrive you’re a serf, a slave. Anything the boss asks, the answer is, yes . And most incoming men accept it or get booked. There is a prefigurative revanchist culture *goin*’ on right now in that building,” the inmate said as he issued a *cabeceo* to the direction of the prison in Canon City, and then he spoke of ADX.

“But ADX is different. Just 475 men. The dream team of bad guys. And its quiet, lord is it quiet. Soundproof cells, showers in the seven by twelve. It’s nice man. ADX is buttoned up real tight. Range thirteen has Yousef. And I haven’t even been to H-unit, where Richard Reid and *Moussaoui* are. All the terrorists are there. All but my man TK, inmate 04475046. And while we aren’t in the G-unit, we have privileges like the dog run and communications are loosened in ways well,” he said with a small smile.

“How come you don’t ever speak like this?” MO asked again.

“You know the difference between an inmate and convict?” the inmate asked.

“Well, an inmate is merely a detained person before they’ve been convicted; usually in a county jail,” MO said.

“That’s the technical delineation, yeah. But inside a *convict* is a man who knows the code; he’s institutionalized, wised-up. And an inmate is a fish, a man who still thinks like a civilian. A man who is leaving one day. A man getting out,” the inmate said with a grin that rose so slowly the metal tooth

appeared like a sunrise between trees, behind dissipating fog, hidden until well after the dawn.

Isaiah heard the words, saw the inmate's shit-eating grin *via* MO's eyes, felt the dry-lightning sparking on the brain from the *fMRI* , the *DTI* and the *bots* he had running the veins like a spotlight and the arteries like a German Shepard Dogs sniffed out the evidence of something amiss. Isaiah felt himself open and close on something deep inside. He heard words rhyme in the cell block, and in the inmate's head; these were codes convicts used to hide what they were saying from all ears but those in the car itself. He heard: Jack & Jills, meaning *pills* , Lady from Bristol, meaning *pistol* , Mop & Pail, meaning *jail* , Storm & Strife, the goddamn *wife* , Twist & Twirl, which meant a *girl* .

"You know what a sigma male is?" Isaiah asked loudly from across the lab; finally giving voice to his vex. He asked this from the dark side of the lab as the inmate stared back at the illuminated *stelae* of *Mushussu* and then *Umu* on the large hanging stones -from where the voice seemed to come from- and he -again and all at once- felt embarrassed by how little he in fact knew.

Isaiah had thought about it as he walked from the inmate's 12 o'clock to the east side of the lab; a few meters and a few seconds away. And he knew that there was exactly one way to get that hidden information. And so Isaiah stepped closer toward the desert *stele* of water -*Enki*- and was thus lit up now for the inmate to see just one half of in this light. Isaiah detuned his anger, and spoke in a tone in perfect valence with the inmate's own ears.

"Lyndon, today, today I'm *gonna* tell *you* a story."

II. 2034 e.v.

"Why?" MO asked. He smacked his hands together to remove the grey dust.

"You mean, *how* ?" Isaiah said as he worked on the engine's torque converter; the bolts were aligned now in the spaces of the flywheel and the rocker arms barely moved; they balanced on fulcrum like automatons of an old clock; sawing lumber, hewing water, spinning at all hours of the exactly-timed day.

“No, I mean, *why* ,” MO said with some force. Isaiah had pushed on him - on MO- too often lately, and MO was in the mood to push back.

“Well, let me tell you *how* and then you tell me if you still want to know *why* ,” Isaiah said and placed a 21mm socket on the engine bolt and torqued it down to 55nm. “I have all the data from the PraXis cloud on him. I also have his genome, and all the data from his clones. That 1.617 million triune-permutations over fifteen -nearly sixteen- years in over 590-trillion unique situations with gene expression and endocrine function and module activation along 451-billion rubrics organically built by the algorithms you have -graciously MO, most graciously- constructed.

“And each of those were fed back into each clone for a total of 980-hours each; over a dozen years,” Isaiah said as he looked over each black bolt of the flywheel.

“When?” MO asked.

“At night, while they slept.”

“Ok,” MO said to encourage Isaiah to continue on.

“And so each feeling they had produced a precursor to an engram that I allowed to rise or fall organically; along a natural *sine wave* algorithm. I made no attempt to push them. Some feelings built memories and some did not; and I measured each one during their time under observation.”

“Beyond passive observation?” MO sought a clarification.

“Right, during the active portion of my scanning of their brain and body. And this of course included the Jacks and the other sixteen,” Isaiah did not mention the Bust.

“Now, he hid things from us. He hid important things from us. But there’s no way to know what it is until he tells himself,” Isaiah said as he replaced the valve covers and hand tightened the quick T-nuts.

“Tells, *us* ?” MO asked as if Isaiah had misspoken.

“No. Tells *himself* . He has it sequestered away from the *hippocampus* and language centers of his left hemisphere. And,” Isaiah said as MO interrupted.

“What about his right hemisphere? Can’t we get it when he’s asleep? He dreams in language, unlike over 90% of the population, he can read and use rational language in dream-state.”

“MO. I know. And no, it’s not available there either.”

“Oh,” MO said. He didn’t understand why.

“So, I built a key. A book by key.” Isaiah said as the black socket evaporated and the black ratchet frittered away next and Isaiah’s hand unfurled from the grip as the engine lay inert on the stand with flywheel attached and the new transmission he had built on its own stand 2.3 meters away.

“And what, you *gonna* read him a bedtime story?” MO asked with a grin.

“You’re goddamn right I am. He’s *gonna* hear every thought he’s ever had, and with the phonemes taken from his dear Jacks -and the rest of his feral clones- eventually one or two or three of those phenomes will be said to him in his own voice, with his own tenor and tymbal, and,” Isaiah said as he pushed the rolling trans-jack toward the engine and placed the bell of the tranny just aft of the flywheel. He slid the torque converter upon the tines and mated it up with a retrograde turn and the weight of an 11-pound push.

It sank and thunked and sounded like a door closing from one side of the universe to the next.

“And?” MO asked.

“And let’s fire this thing up,” Isaiah said of the new engine and MO felt a slight pique at this delay.

“Isaiah, and how will those random phonemes from his own clones or the Jacks help discover the hidden memories?”

“How?” Isaiah asked.

“Yes, Isaiah, *how* ?” MO checked the time and saw it was 2358hrs and his own algorithms Isaiah had asked him to build for the next morning were signaling that they were ready for operation.

Isaiah just looked at him under that hooded brow and said, “I thought you wanted to know *why* ?”

III. 2040 e.v.

“Shoot,” Lyndon said.

“Well, the wall keeps changing and the voice recording updates,” Chen said.

“And?”

“Well, why?”

“You mean, *how* ?” Lyndon said with a laugh.

“Ok.”

“There’s an algorithm that’s built into the concrete now; after I poured it and chiseled it I added a small CPU that has an organic algorithm generator that scans the genomic data from all mankind and updates any new data in real time.”

“Every day?”

“Every second,” Lyndon said. It was every .98 seconds, but the number one -the full integer- was close enough between friends.

“From where? Everywhere?” Chen asked.

“Yup. And more and more is found each day. Like buried treasure, my friend. Like chests full of a King’s silver or mouths full of gold fillings,” he smirked and took a drink of water. The bubbles ran off either side of his tongue into his jowls and gurgled there.

“Do you listen to the voice?” Chen asked about the man who spoke in the athenaeum describing the wall and the lineages and updated the story every so often; adding detail, context, names here and there.

“I think of *Homer* and how his world -his *Anaximander* map- was mere river ocean; hemmed in. It was *Ulysses* that pushed on the edge of that; seeking a way out. A way out, Chen, a way off the map,” Lyndon said as Chen thought he heard the voice of the man of the athenaeum speak in background now. “Even *Dante* has him speak of the west: ‘Oh Brothers,’ I said, ‘who through a hundred thousand dangers have reached the West deny not to this brief vigil of your senses that remain, experience of the unpeopled world behind the sun’

Lyndon went quiet and Chen knew he had failed to understand all with which the man -his friend- was wrought up, despondent, unable to move through any of this that catacombed and dungeoned him. But Chen felt something within that moved in rhythm like music, not math; like poetry, not prose.

Chen saw he had made a son of sorts -teaching him so much, so much more than the world knew- and that the son had gone just slightly passed some horizon unseen from this shore.

“Ahab went further, for the Pacific was next. And he of course returned to the *Sea of Japan* and then shoved off from the *Tahiti* of the soul. The Pacific is the end of the unknown. Ahab is man responsible only to himself and no longer the gods,” Lyndon said.

“Ok?” Chen asked. He was not following the words, only the man, and he noticed even the room now was pulling light -moonlight- away to give the man peace. He felt sadness -not fear- as he saw his friend was in fact losing his mind; *no*, he corrected, *he was mad about the soul*.

“Ok, so we are the children of such an admission,” Lyndon said. “We are all solipsism’s, and dead-enders; we are all built up in brain with module after module of four or five men inside, all with their memories, all arguing about which way to point the bowsprit. We are foundering, the sea is above the gunwales, the sails are torn and the masts are bent. And the whale is over three masts. Each man is -and believes he is- captain of this wreck. Each man inside. You admit we are all manifold inside this head, recursions and quiet doubts and injunctions and loud shouts; yes?”

Chen nodded at two thirds of that.

“What would a man with such a memory as mine need in order to truly forget?” he asked his friend who had more and more trouble remembering each day. “The gods gave man the power of forgetting and called it a defect. The gods gave me the curse of remembering it all and called it benefit.

“I asked the gods -and I have no idea if it worked- but I begged them to help me forget. And in return, we all -me and my four or five-man crew- we all agreed I’d figure out a way to return their black ship to port,” he said with a smile that meant he had just implied something well beyond the

vehicle he had just used; something tiger-yellow and black-turbaned that was stowed away.

“And one man, I cannot name him, but one man inside me is the real captain and he -if he were restored- would steer the ship back east and return to the map of *Anaximander* , and *Homer*’s mere river sea watched over by the gods,” Lyndon said as he plotted -again and again- to kill all but one man; and do it one man at a time.

IV. 2018 e.v.

He waited until dusk and moved across 6th avenue in between the traffic that moved in coagulated lumps. He navigated east around the building to the rear.

His LBE was filed with 30rd 5.56 magazines and 15rd mags of 9mm low-velocity rounds. He had a total of 225 rounds in waiting with forty-seven bullets loaded into his two weapons as he moved.

He was swaddled in UHMPE body armor, *not that he’d need it* , he thought. These guys were as entirely unprepared for death as they were for life; *TV babies, junkies, the insouciant* , he thought as he moved around the building.

His black hockey mask was angular -sharp and fractaled like a piece of shined coal- and it covered the throat. His neck was wrapped in his grey and black *keffiyeh* . He had new black boots on his feet that had no DNA tracked on them from any home, car or anywhere else he may have been; he had put them on from the box in the garage just forty-three minutes ago.

He walked passed the black van with Elvis plates from Mississippi; passed ragged grass tore up by the dogs. He left his weapons holstered and tied back and -twice- kicked at the door at the rear of the house that shared walls with *VI Tattoo* . It flew open with a burst during the second kick. Shards from the jamb flew like bone from a fracture; dried paint like spatter of blood from a wound.

The tattoo studio -a lovely place of custom lumber and hammer-textured fixtures and brown and cherry warmth- was lower down and twenty meters away. It was buzzing with the cycling -white- noise of the *cliché* chattering

by the crew and the iron and brass components of the tattoo machines; he felt the buzz in his joints. He unholstered his pistol and walked through the living room scanning for movement. He saw a leg -bare, female- running to his left and he immediately pointed his sidearm -the olive drab *Sig Saur* Scorpion- upon it like a compass needle. She moved like an elusive true north.

He pursued; crouching now like a lion just above the grasses of the plain. The bedroom door slammed to shield her, but he booted it and as he penetrated the jamb he scanned the room for movement. Within 2.3 seconds he trained the muzzle on the girl -her head and throat- as she cowed on the bed and screamed. He shot her twice, the weapon clacked more than it whispered. It was loud but didn't sound like a gunshot. It recoiled slightly and sounded more like someone closing a metal drawer or the lid of a toolbox in a huff.

He breathed. The brass bounced a few times on the wooded floor. He watched to see if the body moved.

She shut the fuck up as the bullets tore through her brain and jaw and throat, he thought as he checked his weapon's slide. *If she had been quiet he might not have shot her so quickly; but women are noisy -like kids- and for that they must pay a price. How many prey animals scream before they're attacked?* he asked himself, *only the one's that get dead,* he answered and turned his head. *Silent is the operating procedure for prey.*

Look it up, he thought as rejoinder to the invigilating eye in felt in the sky.

He scanned the room for anyone else; it was empty. He began clearing the other rooms of this bohemian ramshackle shotgun home. It was absent people; only littered with drug paraphernalia and videogame shit; mismatching dishware and cutlery were scattered about. But -he had to admit- there was some genuinely impressive art on the walls. Jeremy Costilow was talented and had decent taste in other people's art as well. A 7-foot-tall and 4-foot-wide painting from a local Denver artist flanked him, the brown and black and tan painting was by Tiffany Bozic and it was of a female form with four eyes. He stared at it as if she -the object of the painting but what he assumed was the artist herself- was caught in two spaces at once; a fragmentary superposition. *Beautiful* , he thought as the

weird-looking dogs -*pugs* he thought they might be called- hopped upon the couch and barked half-heartedly. He moved out of the rooms and into the hall that approached the studio north and below this home. He stood in front of the pugs.

He shot both dogs with one round each and headed toward the door that led to the tattoo shop. As he approached he could hear laughing and casual movement. He knew then that they hadn't heard a thing.

He breathed.

He opened the door with his left hand -his right hand gripped around his automatic now hovered over the elbow of the left- and he scanned what he could see with just a sliver of this view. James, who was bearded and in tight black skinny-jeans -the type girls and Metallica wore- was walking past the aperture with a stencil in his hand. James didn't even look at the doorway. Lyndon could hear Jeremy's tattoo machine buzzing to his left and then he heard that loud voice of his explode in bursts of cackling laughter and short phonemes. He had planned to lecture Jeremy before killing him, but that laugh -and the desire to end it at once- made him fill the doorway with his form, turn to his left and point the pistol at Jeremy and fire all at once in a *fusillade* .

He lit him up three times right at the mouth -and its harsh laugh- and he felt a calming as he filled that hole with the clacks and heat of slow-moving ballistic metal like a god sending meteor from space down to the ground to kill the din of mankind. All sound was absorbed and sucked back into the head -as balance to the equation of all the bone and blood and numina that escaped- as Jeremy's last laugh was sprayed up and back toward the grey wall.

Lyndon then put two more into Jeremy's seated client. She was a fat girl with no expression on her face; but now she had two holes in her chest. He saw mist of blood rise like cloud from both of them and all speaking and laughing and nonsense stop. The particles of blood refracted no light; a single -compressed- far-end of the spectrum reflection of dark red is all that was available to see. Nothing passed through, nothing escaped.

He breathed. He trained the muzzle on movement to his starboard side.

He turned his whole body to his right and saw James running toward the door. He fired two shots as James dropped to the floor. Even down, James kept moving. Lyndon had only wounded him with two entry wounds to the back shoulder and neck; only one exit wound out of the throat. The movement -the thin man slinking on the floor slowly- presented no challenge or obstacle and so Lyndon turned clockwise further and stepped fully into the room to see what else was his in this world.

He saw Dean in the other room -white and bright in contrast to the dark brown and blacks and ambers of the room Jeremy and James worked within- and he was hunched over his client and still tattooing. Dean Paget had headphones on and so did his client, and Lyndon was amazed as he saw the client's eyes were closed. Then as if Lyndon's silent amazement alerted him, Dean look up and his right eye saw James on the floor in the dark room and his left eye saw this black clad hockey mask hovering above its own body and weapon looking like Death with his scythe.

Dean pulled his tattoo machine up in a half surrender; just one arm raised in submission to this wraith.

The other gloved hand still lay on his client with a paper towel in it covered in blood and blue ink. His foot was still on the pedal as the Workhorse Iron coil-machine buzzed and ran at 55% duty-cycle; ink spattered his client in atomized mist that nobody cared about now. Lyndon fired four shots; two into Dean at the neck and jaw and two into his client, a skinny male in his mid-twenties. They both had four ragged exit wounds from the expanding hollow-points that came apart like dry snowballs thrown through a desiccated winter air.

The buzz of Dean's machine kept on filling the air like the chatter of a hive of hornets as his dead-man foot pressed to the floor under his weight. His body was held up by the client chair he slumped upon and he and the client leaned together like an A-frame house in the forest. Lyndon -hearing James move and groan- turned left and put one more into James. His head exploded onto the shoes of the fat girl that sat -dead and leaking- next to Jeremy.

The empty magazine held the slide back in a kind of formal and still bow. He didn't hear music but something approximating angels murmuring

overhead. He knew he had thus performed well.

Lyndon himself bowed a bit too as he lay his eyes upon Jeremy who was lying inert on the floor. Then from his inside pocket Lyndon removed a small copy of a book -a bookmark of a half-jack slid into it at a random page- and he set the *feuilleton* on the brown -bar-topped- counter made of 100-year old lumber from barns torn down long ago. The book was pushed to the back of the grey wall and stood next to a bottle of honey-colored bourbon whisky and a skull of a racoon painted in bright colors with dried flowers in the eyes and no lower jaw. The counter was spartan, clean, but held the shop printer, a few tattoo machines, stainless steel trays and the *accountment* of the installation artist: ink wells, A&D ointment packets, paper-towels and a squeeze bottle of green-soap.

He stared at this addition to the counter and felt -believed- that the book looked like it had always been there. The bookmark cast no shadow under the Edison-lights. The bodies lay below his vision now.

He released the empty magazine and slid it into his side pouch. He loaded another mag and with his right thumb released the slide with a click. He shot five more times into Jeremy's back and ass to make sure the motherfucker was dead. "Mid-laugh, right in the middle of that horrid fucking cackling laugh," Lyndon said -describing aloud what he'd just done- muffled under his mask.

He went through their pockets retrieving \$1,909 in cash. He didn't bother with the wallets. He moved their legs and arms like setting the time to an analog clock. He untied one pair of boots and reminded himself of each task. He spent twelve minutes with the bodies; and breathed deeply *via* the nose.

He walked back through the house and wished he could take some art, but he didn't. He left emptyhanded through the back door as he had come in; the weapons either holstered or tied back. The carbine was slung still and held back at the foregrip to his LBE's belt. It was 1919hrs and dark; winter had rolled this part of the earth away from the sun three hours ago. He realized he didn't even see what the girl in the bedroom looked like; it could have been Sarah for all he knew. He smiled to think that he didn't care. *If it was her, then she'd have died without either of them knowing who the other*

was. *An ignominy for her not him. A final insult that he had on her. Apropos* , he then thought as the street was quiet except for the gravel that crunched under his boots.

He walked down the alley passed Jeremey's ridiculous cars; *a jacked-up van like some A-team 4x4*, he thought; and a lifted Gremlin, *or some shit*, he continued on dismissively and with contempt.

He then took a right at the cross street and arrived on Washington and turned left. He walked until he arrived at his own car. He had walked slowly, leaving the mask on. The license plate had been removed just in case anyone was filming. *Even meter maids filmed now* , he thought.

He got in the car and removed his mask. He pressed the brake with his new boots on; *these boots made the pedal feel weird* , he thought. He then pulled away -south- toward *Alameda Way* with 575 horsepower and zero guilt; a clear conscience for six murders that felt as good as six million killed when one drops *Azithromycin* in the belly at lunch. With Michael dead -and now Jeremy- he could focus on the lower-score people that remained. Michael and Jeremy were personal, the rest were more to pay the universe back for its banquet; to do his duty by it, to clean up the mess.

He let music play low around him as the roan grey horse galloped inside his soul and into the desert of his conscience; he traveled away from any temporal law that once may have lived in the clear borders to the Sheriff-less town inside him he was never coming back to again.

V. 2022 e.v.

"If there is no *Unabomber* there is no me," inmate 16180339 said as his voice moved gracefully between the diamond shaped fence between each man's dog run pen.

Kaczynski stared at MacLeod and furrowed his brow; the guards walked the perimeter. The air was cold at fingertips, at cheeks, at ends. Each inmate's feet moved fluidly under their heads.

"Look, you killed the top five percent -from among the top five percent- i.e., the technocrats, the inventors, the top of the top who could build modernity," inmate 16180339 said as they walked along the fence. Gravel

crunched; orange cloth made sounds like hands in cabal. The sky was neither grey nor white; no birds flew above. The sun was well below the high walls of ADX.

Theodore Kaczynski -inmate 04475-046- neither nodded nor shook his head.

“You could justifiably say I killed small fries; nobodies. You could say that you took out big wigs, movers and shakers, while I merely hit people with no influence. I don’t deny that. What I say is this: everyone you killed was easily replaced by another 130-IQ asshole. And you would say, *yeah but if enough 130-IQ motherfuckers were killed they’d eventually run out . The 130-IQ crowd is finite* , you’d say. And you’d be right.

“They represent a mere five percent of the population. No more than ten percent,” inmate 16180339 said as they turned at the ninety-degree corner of the cage and walked back. They could have -and were expected to- turn - left for *Kaczynski* and right or MacLeod- in their pen, but they instead turned 180-degrees back so that they could continue to speak.

This time of exercise -outside- was afforded to each prisoner one hour a week. Six days contained 144 hours. And on this seventh day each prisoner was given one of twenty-four.

“Go on,” *Kaczynski* said. His hair was shocked white; his beard the same. His skin was folded like a squeeze box; his voice was soft. The gravel sounded the same under each inmate as they strolled.

“I too could say that I went after mere -clinical- sociopaths; not average *fellas* . I too could say I went after a finite subset of mankind. And thus, they -your targets and mine- represent the same proportion of the whole: a mere five percent. I went after my personal enemies; you went after abstract foils. You targeted the architects of modernity, and I went after thieves and lairs and cuckolds. But, look deeper. Look at the math, Ted.

“Both cohorts, yours and mine, they represent five to ten percent of the whole. Neither of us could take them all out, we are but limited men, one man can only do so much. But, we hit the right type of people. If anyone recapitulated our moves, if anyone took up our mantel, we could eliminate both ends of the catastrophic whole.

“I -and my followers- could kill the sociopath; you and your followers could extirpate the technocrat. This is my point. We seek the same thing but from opposite ends of the extreme,” inmate 16180339 said as they walked slower along the fence. The large loops of the fabric of felony orange made arms and legs seem small. The flip-flops made the feet seem vulnerable.

“Go on,” *Kaczynski* said again. He didn’t trust -but he listened to- inmate 16180339.

“Neither one of us could kill all the cohorts of our hated ends of the gaussian curve. But we could inspire others to go for the remainder. You could inspire those that have desire to kill the big-picture types, and I could motivate those that have cathexis to extirpate the low-bottom kinds. But both sorts, the technocrat and the sociopath -each type of scum- are the cause of almost all the pain and destruction and evil of our world. Eventually -if enough people murder 130-plus IQ technocrats and also the clinical sociopaths- society would run out of such people,” the inmate said.

“Each end is but ten,” inmate 16180339 said, “percent of the whole.”

“Time,” the guard on second tier said, the doors opened, and the sound echoed as *Kaczynski* and MacLeod both turned and walked toward the apertures in the wall.

1. The Scottish Curse All that is good is instinctive - and hence easy, necessary, uninhibited. Effort is a failing: the god is typically different from the hero Twilight of the Idols [Nietzsche, Fredrich].

“What do you know about the Sigma male archetype?” – Isaiah [0932hrs]

“Alphas need a tribe. They need to run things. They are extroverts. And they have no more than a 130 IQ in a typical group. Any higher and they cannot lead their tribe. And so I know enough to know that I was confused for a long time. Thinking I was an alpha, when I was like the mirror opposite of the alpha -not a beta obviously- something much darker, singular, alone.” – the inmate [0933hrs]

“Good, you’ve got it now.” – Isaiah [0933hrs]

The Interviews XMMN; PraXis Cloud Vol. 153 [Inmate 16180339]

Skotland is full of dangerous natives who speak an incomprehensible language and the weather is awful The 13th Century Yellowed-Calf Vellum [Viking travelogues]

I. 2037 e.v.

The heavens were austere and vacant of any distracting moisture; it was as steel-blue as *the Author* would have seen it. And it hovered over the white - vernal and wet- snow that lay on the forest floor like a man mourning his lover’s sleep at this later hour.

The trees were black with the soaking of the melting snow, the high country had received 36” in the last 24-hours and it was now 41-degrees. The sun grew shadows from these *noir-arbors* like spring shoots: quickly and stretching to matching their ancestors of the trees.

These shadows and their darker tiger-striped *Aspens* created a tangle-nest of black on the vast reflecting snow and the anodyne sky seemed to stare at it in paralysis; scared to stroke it as head-hair, fearful of the scalp beneath the

hair; in dread of the cold and what it would mean for a woman, a wife, who was so inert, so still beneath him.

It kept its distance; and everything remained as it was.

Blax stood in the large window of the crow's nest in the main house; the high-hub between the four elevated containers of the Jacks. The window looked out on the land like the center of a flower with all its western petals removed, like a gear ground down on one leading tooth, like an atom with protons stacked to one side for a moment in time that nobody knew if it was before or after the star had given up the ghost.

His coffee warmed his hand through the mug and the steam rose and attempted the same for his chin and cheeks. His chest was heavy and he hesitated to increase his beta-blockers wondering if he was missing something; something his endogenous anxiety would help him locate.

One's feelings must map onto the terrain of reality , he thought. *Being happy isn't a goal in itself, it's the result of having one's shit together. Remember that, always* , he continued to think, abjure, remind. He drank the robust brew and eschewed the PGC prompt asking for the code to release the anti-anxiety chemicals. He'd be -he'd remain- nervous; and he'd use it to focus his attention. "Pay attention," he then said aloud.

Things were off in some way and he could feel it.

He checked his galvanic skin response data for the last twelve hours and began to see a pattern; one he couldn't truly understand, but a pattern for certain, he believed. He saw footprints in what were mere depressions in the snow; faces in fast-moving clouds; God in the injunctions made merely of phonemes and wind; not words.

"Jack," he called into his DMs and waited for his Sergeant to answer. He stared out at the manichean landscape of white snow and black trees and he then saw the timid hop of a doe sniffing at the wet bark of an *Aspen* . He then noticed her tracks: imbricate and hemmed in by the depth of the heavy snow substrate; no blood, just the blue holes stabbed into the snow-pack by her skinny hooves and legs.

"Aye aye, captain," Jack One intoned in mock seriousness. The voice soothed Blax in ways he could not articulate. He had never been valued for

who he was, never respected by anyone, he felt. The Jacks were the only ones. And each time they spoke he could feel it; he couldn't name it, nor say it. He could only feel the relief. The Jacks loved him for him, not for what he could give them, but for what he was. He was not fungible to them.

The west was a lie, he let himself think, like an inner whisper, a secret; and yet here he was defending it in body, but not mind. *Why?* he asked himself inside.

He did not need to relive the memory of being ripped off and abandoned and ignored -ignored- over and over. That lesson was now part of the sinew, the muscle the blood. It was assumed now.

He knew it in his germline cells: nobody he'd ever met -outside the Jacks- ever gave one fuck about him. He was a thing to mine, to strip, to juice, to squeeze and wring-out for his ore. He was an asset to be used and he had had the bad taste to point this out to those who drained him of each drop. And every man was treated like this, not just him. It was a death culture. And Zendik had acted no differently, stripping him for parts and then tossing him on the side of the road. Actual men -and women- did this. It was not a machine like America was; Zendik had real people with names he could pronounce. Names that he remembered awake and while in dreams.

They had names he sometimes said aloud.

But -with his face wet from coffee steam- he watched the fawn now in the snow and did not give her a name. There was no need for names between her and him.

He -he returned to his lament- *was their prey animal who bucked and bleated and complained* . This was his true crime in the eyes of society. He complained when they ripped out his heart. They thought he wanted his money and time back; but -and this they never heard- all he wanted was the heart returned in one piece.

And as with all mathematics, each side of the equation must balance. They took what he most valued: the heart. And he would take what they most desired: their heads. Blood for blood would be had. He saw tiger stripes on the snow and hard lines between white and black. He saw himself retake his

heart and place it back inside -behind the ribs- upside-down. *From above* , he then thought.

“Run my PGC’s Galvanic through that new algorithm in the house’s main hub will you?” he asked aloud to Jack One; adding, “twelve hours back.”

“Roger that,” Jack said and Blax’s head went silent for a few seconds, and his eyes just noticed things and their boundaries and held any judgement in abeyance for now. Judgement was held back like the sea. If he could quiet the head the heart would rise -and drum- and the blood’s veins would connect back like rays to the sun bleeding its heat onto the earth.

Deriving disparate facts from the data available had a slightly numinous hue; a corona of auguries from thrown stalks or pig entrails; but he shook it off with the craquelure head of an old man who was nest to mercurial -peripatetic- parasites.

He shook his head to clear its insides; but his chest did not move.

Beneath the fissured brow were the reactive eyes -that perched in the alcove of this *cabeceo* , like migrating birds- the eyes were sheltering under a cornice, trapped at theses latitudes by the storm. The eyes, they fluttered and shook off the cold. They -these eyes- were not *the Author’s* coals that glowed but the albedo of that glow off the pair-birds who warmed themselves by a fire they had not set, but yes, *they too still glowed* , he thought. Glowed -his heart thought in simple syllables- like the anthracite coals, in the ashes of ruin. *And the untottered lieutenant stood forth in the cleanness of the morn; lifting his splintered helmet of a brow*, he thought.

But this morning, now it was in position to a heaven no longer populated by any redeeming girl at all. *Where was his girl?* he asked in between all that data that streamed in from his coder. *Where?* he asked as each part of his head -in his own reveries- was made into birds and animals, the skull itself a bestiary, a domed forest.

She dominated in wholeness, while each detail lacked any mention of her.

The Jacks used their coders to remove guilt or fear for their jobs. The coders made them impervious to doubt. He used his PGC for one thing: to keep her far off; safely away. He used it to pretend she didn’t exist. And yet with each detail of her banishment, her *spectre* floated closer than ever to

his soul. He knew nothing of her -her name and face and each thing she'd ever said all locked away- while all of her seemed to know everything of him as his anxiety grew inside. He felt God had His eye upon him now, in vex of three different kinds.

One eye of a woman , Blax thought.

He stared up from the ground back into the scattering sky and saw it in perfect burgeoning blue. That blue was no mystery to him, and despite the ominous and Delphic warnings from artists and mystics the *grandeur* of life did not abate with each new discovery; *the unweaving of the rainbow* . Rather, he thought, *the magnificence of this throttling orb with all its manifold lifeforms and ornate brocade of physical laws was made even more clear by the bright light of rationality and discovery and the thing observed* .

His coder informed him; the data overwhelmed him; who he was tore him asunder.

The blue was the scattering of short-wave light, the violet end of the spectrum across the trillions of particles in the daytime sky; and as the angle of the sun changed over the next twelve hours the longer waves would be picked up, burnishing the evening firmament with some longer waves of orange and red and *infra-red*. The blue swelled toward him like a wave as he tried to peer beyond or through it, searching the spaces betwixt and beyond the beauty with his enhanced CNS.

But the tumescent blue crashed onto his eyes like beach-break and pushed his thoughts backward and back down into the earth; the sand.

The sadness becomes a tempered tool , he thought; it digs its way -less efficiently than one prefers- into the flank, and then further, farther, in.

“Father,” he then said aloud.

It digs an emptiness where there was only previously nothing. *A universe from nothing* , he thought, and he felt a whole new grandness of aching and lacking, and pain; a pain reserved for demi-gods and for saints; the pain of being certain of things untrue, and suspecting things in error, and looking beyond the nose.

It was the pain of knowing what could have been, if only there were a full deity, a better version of themselves. This empty hall *homme sensual* will never walk, never hear his own footfalls echoing inside of, never strain to hear the place those echoes invigilate. Normal man just lived to live; normal man didn't ask *why* .

"A secret you knew but don't know how to tell; it fucks with your honor," Blax said out loud.

His eyes were filling with the rising ocean of the new normal, and yet even as it sloshed against its coastal lashes -and embayed organ- his spinning head shrank from the cold austerity of the expanding, inflating, universe. It was an ocean as the smallest phenomenon within a desert of known and unknown things.

"The end of man is knowledge, but there is one thing he cannot know. He cannot know whether the knowledge will save him or kill him," he said as the crows landed in the trees to the west.

He had pushed the work of missing her off to another day; for a thousand days in a row. And finally, with *Bon Iver* in the ears and just two pages of Robert Penn Warren read this morning taking him by the collar, he had broken down inside and let that cataract in the eyes cut the banks of his dry desert-wash open like an already flayed and yielding sinner; a disgraced samurai bowing to the *tanto* ; a blade used as rarely as a dead man's hands.

"Just the once," he said into the room's air.

He felt the tears fall backward into the skull and pour onto the heart -and the heart's clockworks- cooling and tempering them too; rendering the incessant heat into catalyst for a sturdy and mottled strength; a patina of softness erased by the fissures of stone and cleaved by banding and iron fasteners.

He could not know if she had ever really loved him. *Why even put it that way?* he chided himself.

Thus, could he not know whether to cry for never having had the love of the woman he most desperately wanted and most recklessly worshipped; or should he become lachrymose for ruining what love there was because he had not the senses to apprehend it? He felt all too blind and too capable of

seeing the vast black expanse on both sides of each eye; and the borders three that have no *Maginot Line* and no mark for him to see. He measured what was tall; a wall that was five foot three. He ignored what had nothing visibly broad nor deep.

He measured just one thing.

He feared death knowing there is not enough time to repair what ought never had either been torn asunder nor put back together again. He feared life knowing there is too much to study on all the ways his hands did move with no effect.

And to not feel the loss, the pain, the devastation of that dissolution is unethical, he insisted; and he felt as scoundrel for refusing to miss her, refusing to feel sad by it all. But, he admitted, he was pirate every day out at sea, and could only afford to be a good man for a short while when briefly upon shore. He -he believed- was a most noble and honorable man; but just briefly now; now as he felt annihilation. Others felt whole; that they were something. He felt he had to keep a weather eye out for each moment -for in each moment he was something else- he had to be chaos held down by the ropes the crew tied.

He had no self upon which to rely.

He felt he would always keep that love inside him locked in a box that opens once in one-thousand years. He let the narcotics wear off for a few hours to feel the bleak black and its brilliancy for just a few moments; to remember just why it is that he was so hard and furious and swaddled in anger. He let the body feel aching so he may return to upright posture when he got up from the chair he had somehow fallen -slouched- into with the slaking of pain.

He tried to capture all the pain and the nature of pain, but the pain had all the rope and tackle and all the loyalty of his crew. He was the thing described by his pain's albedo, it was his topography thus revealed. The pain herself -like the sun- is still opaque; it cannot be looked upon. He hoped one day to hold her again, if only to use her as block, to prevent the sun from illuminating his surface to any others for that moment; that shadow cast of time.

He remembered when the mountain cat hunted him, and he rose the hand to the face to feel for the scar that was not there.

Audre Lorde had said that poetry was the only way to give names to the nameless so they -these inchoate ideas- could be thought of at all. *She was right; even a stopped clock is right once a day*, he thought. He ran a 24-hour atomic clock so it had less tolerance for error; but it was -therefore- more precise as well. Weapons were like this, the AK-47 is less precise, sloppier, and more able to handle dirt and grime and will not jam as much as the M4 platform with its tight tolerances and precision and insistence on detail.

A precise man cannot handle error as much as a sloppy one, he thought. *But, a robust man can try and fail over and over again.*

He checked his wrist chronometer and it was 0819hrs. His atomic clock ran two more decimal places to 0819:51

He imagined the nature of his audience; if he ever got one. He knew he would never speak their language. They used language the way the uninitiated use the pipe wrench: as a hammer. *They were sloppy*, he thought. *They spoke in blandishments and heavy-handed insults; they spoke in bromides and the plagiarized words of borrowed emotions. Their inner lives were as de rigueur as their words, for this is the material from which the inner life is built.*

He almost saw the error he had just described.

If, he thought, people knew that their inner lives would be grander, more nuanced, more beautiful, if they thought in their own language, their own words, their own constructions, they may take an interest in the canon of the West. If they knew they could have an inner life as redolent and magnificent and dramatic as the *Potala Palace* in Tibet, *if they stopped thinking like everyone else*, he thought but did not finish the idea.

He knew -he rebuked himself- he knew they'd have less tragedy too if they avoided what he sought.

The inner life was the thing the poor man could easily have; and with some effort, the rich man maybe could have it too. But never the *bourgeoisie*, the middle class, who can never afford to be out of step with their time and place. The destitute and wealthy -both- can be weird; but not the great mass

of men. For the middle class, the job -their only job- is to fit in at all cost. This *normpathy* is their disease, and they fear the cure as they fear a curse. He ignored the bell-curve that explained why, he ignored the math that justified why not everyone could ignore the rules.

Blax had tried to help his family and friends become full humans; he was *naïve* . They didn't want rescued from *cliché* , from banality, from conformity. *Once you realize that cowards do not want to be heroic, the boring do not want to be interesting, and the shallow have no desire to swim the deep at all, then you can stop wasting time and energy on trying to edify or enculturate, or liberate the middle-class dork* , he thought.

Focus on the tails, the ends of the Gaussian curve, the extremes, he thought, *never on the mean* .

"I do not share your language, but I must answer to it; to this extended phenotype," he said aloud into the room, with words meant for his own ears. They would see his hewn and solid features, to get some sense whence his hard and angular conceits came. He would be seen as something innate, feral; as a part of the unclaimed ground.

He could be hewn, he mused, and chiseled -he saw- from the mottled earth like *the Burghers of Calais* ; unfinished in so far as one suspected they -and thus he- could unshackled themselves of themselves given enough time and the sufficient tools; the cutting and severing of some inner driveshaft and blade.

We assume this is possible all the time , he thought, *when we posit one radical thing or another, when we admonish a man to cease one thing and one behavior or begin another that is beyond a man's -admittedly manifold and variable, but ultimately finite- repertoire. Imagine the absurdity of requesting that a jukebox play a song that isn't in its catalog; or attempting to teach a cow to hunt down its food like a bear* .

He heard the memory of the glass break -in his mind- and the air rush in. He recalled then the girl behind him and all at once -in this memory- she was standing on his bed; she seemed not large, but impervious to pain. It was 2014 and she had a knife, he remembered seeing it in her hand and then all at once she had jammed it into his ribs, and she hit bone with it.

He stood in the crow's nest of *Lot 45* and recollected a memory from decades ago as his skin began to dampen, the mind roil, it made no distinction between then and now. He was vulnerable all over again.

It hurt and this -he recalled- was how he knew he was *ok* . For the truly devastating cut feels like nothing at all. She -however- had hit bone and that stopped her thrust and he had his right hand around her thin -gracile- throat. In an instant he had lifted her up off the mattress and walked upon his own platform bed and moved them both toward the burgundy wall. It was violence on both ends, and yet soft in places measured not by he or she; but by God.

She looked beautiful to him, in this recall. Not a demon at all.

Her head hit the portrait of Burroughs and cracked the thin glass, and her arm still flailed at him now with punches -she had dropped the knife when it vibrated and torqued upon his rib- and she also kicked. He used his left hand to grab her right arm at the shoulder to stop these little-fisted jabs, but she struck him in the forehead once and broke skin and he went temporarily blind in one eye. It matched -he'd later notice- the dropper eye -of William S- as she was pressed between the rendering of the artist and himself as a man. He barked for her to *stop fucking moving*.

"Stop," he had growled three times.

She wailed and declared her love even as she got two more kicks in at his knees. She was still full of air, he hadn't squeezed the throat shut yet. He held her there; he blocked her punches and bled and felt warm at the flank. He demanded she stop her flailing. Another girl lay in bed and groggily rolled upon the glass from the window and cut her hands. She never came back. She left her underwear and just took blouse and boots and left the front door wide open as candles looked like lowering stars all around the house now.

The home was cold and vivisected with a river of air from the window to the door.

She'd go on to ruin him, flood his grow, plot with cops, and kick his door down one more time as the jamb -not the locks- failed. He always

remembered that. *It's not the locks that fail, it's the jamb of the door* , he'd think and try to build analogy from that.

"The frame," he said aloud now. He'd think it was not the lock -the law- that failed but everything around it.

The memory left, the candles were doused, he got no sleep as Sarah passed out. She lay upon the thick *divan* he had thrown over the thin shards of glass. She breathed from the mouth, her hair was white, her knuckles red. He had wiped the blood from his eye and head. He was embarrassed by this. He wouldn't speak of it. It was just one night in a hundred and one million of women attacking men. Alicia had pointed a long-colt forty-five revolver -made of titanium- at him. Brandee had hit him with a black pan on the crown of his head. Teca Thompson and Laura Zimpmpleman had both slapped him in the face as he leaned in unawares.

Kelly too had broken glass and sprayed it all over his bed and smashed his head with one overhand blow like a shop hammer on the anvil. Alicia had told Kelly that Blax *wasn't worth it* ; as if he was the perpetrator. He recalled her lecture after they had tired of assaulting him; after they had each hit his cheek -and the right side of jaw- with punches from under him. They had reached the *parietal* suture over the ear with the waterwheel of little arms falling from above.

He had been asked to leave that apartment by the landlord after that. Neither girl had a scratch.

He returned to the now of 2037; each memory fizzled out. He would seem - if spied with eyes trenchant enough- welded to the obviously molten stone, caught leaning against it as it cooled maybe, stretched but now staid by the fact that while cut free from the mass in his many articulations -the reaching arms of *Le Bourgeois* and their extending hands, and now his searching ideas and their sniffing forays- it would be apparent that his very *self* was sunk deep into the unhewn rock and incapable of any migration.

No chisel would reach that center without real danger of cutting him loose from his seat of power and justification; dismasting him from the earth.

He did not believe in total freedom.

He acknowledged a certain desire for a revelry in a limited liberty for the head and the eyes and mind, manifested by this idiopathic stretching. But the body and heart lay incased, swaddled, in the earth; its minerals and mycorrhiza, its funerary bones and sinew, its fecund entheogens embalming and gestating then burning in the corporeal furnace. *Freedom was a means, not an end, and it should be used as such*, he thought. *People place too much emphasis on it*, he derided, *as if they even knew what to do with such a technology*.

He was tethered to the earth and was happy for these chains. He lay wreaths at the commissure; laurels as offering and aromatics as *homage* and presage to all that speak this sublunary *argot*. From the crow's nest of the home he watched the forest and felt unable to move.

"I take my orders from the mercurial whims of the *rex mundi*," he said with no chagrin as he felt alone, safe to speak. "He himself governed by cosmic law and all that spins beyond the law. But there is no appeal to any higher authority. The orb has been cut loose and is unsupervised, it is a fatherless child given a kingdom to rule; its only advisor a now stolid and silent guard. Only a martial and entropic clockworks move its hands for us. We are its minutes, its nuclear decay, its springs and analog vernal-bloom imbued, its taut gears and autumnal boughs in darkened hues."

He looked out at the snow and trees and sky and evidence of all that moved about such static things in him.

"I forced everything to live at the penumbra and yet refused to allow it to choose sides. We all walk -our gait- in darkness and yet still see -with our *visual cortex* - in light; a dim horizon at the end of our atomic eyes," he said those last words and looked out now at the periphery of house-lights; he saw no faces in the windows of the other container boxes and was glad for it. He could not stand -or afford- to be watched.

"My father was a God to me; capricious and mean and powerful for these traits. He commanded me to love him and I pretended -even to myself- to obey.

"But rebellion grew in my heart and pumped clandestine and plotting blood into my brain like a band of guerillas landing on *Alegría de Pío's* Caribbean shore. A *coup* hatched in my young lungs and I wheezed with

my defection whenever I breathed. A *putsch* rattled in my bones when I ambled along to school for years; and as these bones grew the insurgency filled them with marrow.

“He resented our cavalier ways; ways born of the relative wealth and privilege he bestowed on us without teaching us the ways of men. We frolicked in the cleared forest and its canopy that he governed to clear the way for gilded and warming sunbeams; we kicked and flipped and sawm a bit in the pools he had dug the recesses and hollows for; but his toil hardened only him and only his eyes. We were still soft and unknowing children, as all children are, as all new things are.

“It is only the aging child that is tawdry and worthy of contempt. And my father let his sons be raised by women; he did not do his duty to raise us as men. My brother had not the ingredients for it. But, I could have been *Charlemagne*’s son if raised by *Charlemagne* and not his wife,” Blax said aloud.

He knew that he had forsaken his one duty to himself -to avenge his own honor back then in the now- and had replaced it with the raising of four boys like himself -for the future- he thought. He thought this with something close to hollowness; it was all information, mere data -true but only 2D- as it had no heart; he justified himself with nothing deep. He’d saved his skin, *but lost everything further in. I had survived whilst killing my own soul*, he thought.

To destroy his enemies was what he felt as his first duty, but if that was taken from him -and it was- then his second duty was to edify those like him, in the ways that he never had. He had four boys -his four Jacks- on the frontier of manhood; armed with all that he never had; all that was kept from him.

He tried to think in math, but only words came. He described in ugly metaphors what beautiful integers would put to shame. He justified himself again and again. He blamed others even when he appeared to censure himself. Compliments were mere shells to birds of insults he’d feed and swaddle and protect.

His father had failed him, as his father’s father had failed Lee before. He had always tried to protect his own father’s image in his mind, to say -

cloyingly- that at least Lee had been around, unlike Roy Arthur Clarke. *But this was a lie. Lee had had options, he could have refused,* Blax thought.

And Grandfather MacLeod was around, Blax thought, *and the more opaque that part of the story was the more clear it all became.*

How does one scratch out numerators and denominators above and below the line when the mistake went back so far in time? And this was why anyone with real truth would be ignored; only cheap and easy fixes -only hope- could be sold. Even though three generations of rats -lab rats- suffered from one mother taken away.

Scientists took the rat away; and look what we learned, Blax thought of the scientific experiments on mothers and fathers in orders of mammals lower down: *we've learned nothing.* He moved from species species.

Blax then thought of Jack Four.

It was as if his own brain refused to stay in accusatory mode for more than some set time before it boomeranged back toward self-critique. Jack was obviously wounded, angry, plotting. The *Medea* gene would not stop him, Blax knew. *He -Jack- would kill them all just for spite.*

It was more than spite, of course. Spite was mere steam off the boiling tea of the bourgeois life: the nice of Christ , Blax thought as he tried to look beyond vapor -to water- then flame.

“Then the trees,” he said.

It was stupid of Blax not to know this. He had used what Isaiah pragmatically built as some kind of romantic gesture -as if independent of Isaiah's plans- but it was seen as something else by each Jack. How could he have failed to predict that some percentage -50%, 25%, 12.5%- some percentage if you ran a simulation of his genome enough times would come back with pique, with malice, with self-destruction, even in the perfect environment? He felt a fear, a fear of judgement for just one moment, he felt as if he might be wrong in ways much larger than he debated on.

Not that he had made the perfect anything , Blax thought as governor to his arrogance.

He almost -he didn't, but he almost- thought that the desire to do it right was just one ingredient in the giant error -problem- of the world -the cosmos- itself. He -if he wasn't so smart- would have seen how dumb it was to even think for the 'morrow .

Blax had thought he knew himself so well; *that if given the right environment, the stimulation and fealty, the blood oath, the adventure mixed with discipline and order but affection and genuine love -Jesus, I love those boys more than anything in life- that they would feel it, get from it -from this nectar- what they needed . I must have been mad, he gauzily thought, deluded -insane- not to see what my Jacks would likely want -shit, need- more than anything else one out of four or five times : an enemy.*

"An enemy in me," he said as his breath fogged up the nest's glass.

Was this not the stupidity of the world: thinking all strife could be assuaged, remove all contretemps and growing plots? he nearly -almost- thought in language and words.

This genome thrived on enemies, it is what they -we- were built for, he was able to think. On his flat map inside, he could see peaks crumble and valleys rise as between two points he drew a line. How could it not occur to him that one of them -statistically- would rebel against *him* , and them, against himself? *I mean, it isn't all that clever, it's typical self-destruction, each man does this, when he does things against interest,* Blax thought still thinking of A to B; but nothing above nor below.

He did not forgive his father nor grandfather at all. He pretended to forgive, so he couldn't be accused of hypocrisy.

But, the hubris, the assumption of self-awareness -because one is genuinely, one insists, a thousand times more self-aware than 99% of the population- occurs because one then jumps to the conclusion that one is *sufficiently* self-aware. *This is madness* , Blax admitted. Blax thought he ruminated on his father -his enemies- a thousand times, he had no idea it was twenty, thirty -a hundred- times more than that. He relived each insult each day -he bobbed the sun for rays of hate- a new trial was set, new jury sat, the prosecution was laid out anew each fucking day. But the judge remained; the judge never once left the bench. People think trials are for the innocent or guilty when they are of course for everybody else; for the society writ large .

“Nothing is just what it is; it is too its opposite,” Blax said.

Blax missing one moment in one of four Jacks missed all of it. What he saw -what he knew- was no antidote for what he missed.

Jack Four was running around out there waiting until the last minute to send his spit-sample in, and to tell Blax where to send his. He was doing it as thrill, power move, a total *fuck you* . All of it. And Jack was doing much, much more.

And they all knew it. They all laughed and they all wanted permission to hunt him down and beat his ass. Jack One didn’t even ask, he just marched off into the forest with a hammer in his hand. But he found no trace of Jack Four. They had ruminated on how to find Jack and punish him, but he never appeared. They ran in circles, they issued curses that barely bent candle flames, they flexed and increased heartbeat, but they got no closer to laying hands on Jack Four.

Then the Milkart plant in Atlanta, Georgia got ripped off. Four-metric-tons of narcotic API got loaded into a shipping container with forklifts and Jack Four had drove it away leaving the 3rd shift employees all dead with Oxycontin labels on their faces; playing cards in their pockets -with silvery paint on the black backs- saying: *pain demands a response* . He had done it all on his own, using four *bots* only for entry and analysis of the granules - to determine the narcotic levels- so that he knew which batch to steal.

It was a very simple strong-arm robbery done with a small caliber pistol, a shipping container -40-foot, high cube- and a lowboy tractor trailer that he drove -who knows where- after the heist.

Blax knew that they had the brain perfect for addiction, he himself was addicted to pain killers for two reason. One, they took away his legitimate pain from compression fractures -he assumed- and two, they activated the dopaminergic system of the *thalamus* and pressed on the *meaning* button of the brain. This is why when engaged in a meaningful activity like a good conversation, or work, he forgot to take his medications, as that part of the brain was already activated. He though this as his joints now seemed to abrade.

Even standing hurt the knees.

Whether Jack Four would use the drugs, sell them, or dump them on the White House lawn was unknown. Blax and the other Jacks had just received a post card from Atlanta with his sample vial tapped to the paper; and Isaiah had then told them of the robbery the next day.

Jack had stolen a 1979 Trans Am from the Sotheby's auction two weeks later. It was black and gold and had the 403 Oldsmobile 6.6L engine. He had peeled-out so aggressively from the building that it left a *posi-trac* scuff that moved like two black sidewinders all the way out the bay door. He drove it along New York's FDR, along the East River, with the T-tops out and showing off the bottle of 18-year Bowmore's whisky he stole. It was all seen by the *Landsat9* images Isaiah sent over after he retrieved it.

Isaiah then scrubbed the images from the satellite and the cloud as an ignorant law enforcement team complained of a glitch in their technology.

Blax had sent the vial with his saliva last week -down to the fourth compound in the forest- with no note or any enjoining message; he knew who he was dealing with. The lack of any request would be seen as a sign of respect, he hoped, and that it might lead to the boy -the man- coming back soon so they could discuss all this.

You don't press on this genome, you don't insist, Blax thought, not unless you're willing to kill the knave.

But, Blax knew that this was going to go all the way; that was the *tao* of their genome: all or nothing. They refused to back down when ordered to but capitulated fully when the space for magnanimity was allowed. And so Blax would have to relent or this would end very, very badly for them all. He thought of what he could have done differently, but he knew the point was that nothing could be done. If he had done it more in line with what Jack Four wanted, then Jack Three or Two would have gone rogue, or maybe Jack Four was always going to have to be that guy. It was a system with rules, but with rules nobody was smart enough to name or predict.

One just observed after the Law had passed judgement on them all. One did not predict the judge's words; one merely recalled them once the sentence was pronounced.

Juggling demanded some balls in the air, some in hand, and eventually some on the ground. He remembered a note written in long hand in Jack's room, it had been on page 333 of a book of poetry that quoted at length on esoteric things: *Modern man denied that the gift of failure was spelled with the same letters as if allured from death in secret. Modern man denied the joke by going mad .*

Blax never saw the letters and thus missed the double meaning. He saw half a card, a Jack of Spades riven from left to right. He left the book on Jack's bed to show the respect of not trying to put it back as if he hadn't snooped. But he had looked, he had tried to see. *But the boy was a storm, a storm even he himself was inside ,* Blax thought.

The point was like *Kierkegaard* had made, his task -Jack Four's- would be to make difficulties everywhere because all the other Jacks and he -Blax- himself had set out to make everything better, easier, according to plan. Jack Four saw it as his duty to throw a spanner into the works.

Jesus, Blax had thought, it was in each of them to be that, but they held it in abeyance, they tempered it, they let it out to play for an hour, maybe two, but back it went into the bottle, each time. But not Jack Four, he was going to unleash it, he was going to become that part of them all: the maker of difficulties .

And he -Jack Four- would truly see himself as the hero. Because no matter what that genome did -whether in Blax or the Jacks, whatever they did- it was seen by themselves as heroic. Their brains chose the heroic, and so whatever they did was by definition the thing that they thought was most heroic. And even if they failed, it -their choice- was now seen merely as tragic. *And what was more heroic than the tragic?* they'd always ask and answer both.

Blax then recalled them playing blackjack on the boat and him busting out with twenty-two. *A king ,* he thought now as he saw the board and cards in his memory, *and a three and that godamn nine of diamonds again.*

It was all so rational, and irrational and insane within the model's parameters; and thus, it was all so perfectly sane. The alternative was to live in regret, to see one's self as unheroic, craven, and that might cause something even worse. With this genome you had something dangerous no

matter what; freeze it or heat it, smash it or leave it, either way, something catastrophic would come.

No matter how you rolled the dice it would always come up snake eyes or box cars or some weird combo that would spell victory or ruin; never compromise. There was no middle way with them, with any of them. They'd be 120-degree hot or 40-degree cold. But never 80-degrees at any time. Blax thought of his own vendetta against his own father, a man half of him. The hatred burned to the end. It never eased, it never dimmed, it never extinguished at all. Hatred was their ichor; their blood; it abated only when dried, no longer red, only when dead.

But their power -their conjoined power- was so radical, it was the most radical thing they could do. How -why?- would one throw that away to steal some goddamn Pontiac from an 80's movie and abscond with enough narcotic analgesics to kill the eastern seaboard? Well, I guess, Blax thought with that head dip to the side, *when you put it that way, the answer lie in the question . Jack did it to ruin all their carefully laid plans,* Blax thought. He never thought of the car stolen from him by *bourgeois* Jewish millionaires and people pretending to be his friend; leaving him homeless, desperate and broke; abandoned by his tribe. He never saw the point of why Jack stole that particular car.

"Just because he could," Blax stupidly said aloud and his breath made wet the cold window facing west.

He looked at the images from the robbery again and Jack was garishly wearing a cowboy hat. Jack Four was wearing that hat in the images and Blax could see -now only in his mind's eye- the huge grin the boy was hiding under that brim, and it made Blax laugh softly, but aloud. It was ridiculous and insane and he was furious and thought it was funny too. It was funny in the same way he would recall laughing with broken ribs: cut short by the pain. He was secretly proud of Jack Four for going his own way and knew that that -right there- was the part in him that Jack Four was enthralled by; possessed by. And in order to bring him back they'd have to let him be in charge. It was the only way.

Jack would never again submit to a civil rule.

Jack had a taste of his own moral power. Jack was beyond fucking pissed. He was the sink -the basin- of centuries of anger and outrage. He was where the gods' anger found rest.

He just wouldn't take orders anymore; Jack had figured out at seventeen what Blax had taken forty years to become adamant about; slowly accreting to that conclusion after jobs and partners and fatuous and bossy girls disrespected him on and on and on. And had Blax ever really gone on his own? *Was this what Jack was rebelling against; the compromise that brought them all together?* Blax asked. Blax saw images now, no words for a time. He saw bird wings, snow melt in the spring, he saw the moon sink into the sea.

He saw ouroboros asps, and monoliths that purged and absorbed black snakes with no eyes and tongues that flicked in code. He saw sperm whales asleep. He saw the black beach; the dark waves of ebb tide.

While he was thinking -envisioning- he got a DM from Isaiah with images of a vertical of 2005, 2006 and 2007 *Tattinger's Comtes Champagne* bottles being used as *Molotov* cocktails. They had been thrown through the windows of *Antonio Galloni's* home. Patrol had not even known they were *Tattinger's* bottles until a lab assistant mentioned that these were relatively expensive bottles picked from the crime scene. But Blax knew why Jack had used those bottles. And he knew -half way- why Jack had stolen that Trans Am and why he'd stolen the drugs. *Jesus, he was being romantic and noble and saying, fuck you, with love.* Blax knew Jack was saying, *I listened to you old man, every word, each detail; now do you listen to me?*

The details of each crime were important. They proved to Blax that he had been listened to by Jack. People -men- need touched, loved, listened to in order to thrive.

"To truly stay alive," Blax said.

When Blax was forty-two, he had had a custom suit made to mimic the one his old man wore as a special agent for AFOSI, and the old man hadn't noticed or cared. This kind of shit is exactly what their genome did. They paid attention to detail and then built *tableaux* to prove that they saw what others had missed. They lit candles as votives, they prayed in Latin, they drew runes of *elder Futhark*, they used the exact phonemes of wolves. And

they spoke in both semiotics and with precision and dared anyone to notice; anyone at all. They sent smoke signals up to heaven to impress God.

Big picture, gestalt, then excruciating details; both ends of the extremes , Blax thought as he stared out on all his land.

In 1944 the French resistance had included *Frederic Joliot-Curie* -the son-in-law of *Madam Curie* - and they had a whole slew of *Tattinger's champagne* that they had -with some hesitation- poured out to make *Molotov* cocktails to hurl at the Nazis in Paris nearly a hundred years ago.

Blax had told that story -to the Jack's- one night as he mentioned the French national *ethos* , the lengths they went to preserve the wine; the great cost. He made mention of the harvesting of the vines as mortars dropped, and how they gave it all up -as *Château Palmer* had- when they hid Jews -in chalky cellars- at the expense of their own classified wines.

Jack Four -unique against the other three- had hated to hear all that after they had committed that great sacrilege in *Bordeaux* . He annealed his chagrin now with how he had participated with such glee and such disrespect; and he had felt bitter at what was done. He felt angry at himself and at Blax for duping him into doing it; and then shaming him with those stories. Jack was right, Blax had his own ambivalences before each job, but he burdened the boys with them after each crime, by explaining just what they had done, and to whom.

Jack -now with these specific crimes he committed on his own- was telling Blax that he remembered those stories.

Jack was also mocking *Galloni* for his review of the 2006 *comtes* and his braying of cellaring a case in 2016 -when it was disgorged and released- to see how it would age. *It was a lashing out -with an aesthetic, with charm, and pain, and crass insult and class- and no doubt he had stolen those bottles from Sotheby's along with the whisky; but who knows?* Blax then thought. *Maybe he stole it from Antonio Galloni himself* . Jack was not going to stop until he had repaired or furthered deepened the wound that each of their missions had carved into his soul.

It was pain or cessation, it was death or salvation, but stasis or compromise was out of the fucking question for Jack. The images from the satellite

poured in to Blax's PGC as he stood inert in the nest of the home.

Blax saw that now he -the boy- was hurting and the images of the Trans Am had a little black headed girl riding shotgun, and -sure as shit- a stagecoach side-by-side 12-guage was stuffed -barrels up- in between the low console and her own seat. Her shoulders were as white as lilies and small enough to be swallowed whole by Jack's hand as the images showed him laying his big arm on her as she snuggled in to him. They drove under the *Landsat* imagery that Isaiah had commandeered.

He was tracking him now from New York into Pennsylvania and Blax had an idea of where Jack was going next.

The man -Jack Four- was just too easily wounded; and like a beast- when wounded- he attacked. But when he attacked he'd do more than wound in return.

II. 2012 e.v.

The Osprey spread its wings to gather them; and they settled into the snow upon the hides of their brethren; the Crows stretched the tarpaulin.

The Corvids had punched bushing into four corners of elk hides and deerskins and the Bear's black coat and then used their 4-inch beaks to pin the hides into the earth as the Lion, the Horse and the two Bobcat -a male and female- lay on haunches and let their tails lay in a coil.

They surrounded a large fountain of spring water that had frozen all winter in place.

"Man is like a god. He has -in our eyes- omniscience and yet has need of us. We make and consume death for him, for he cannot kill with clean conscience any longer. His code has grown corrupt and his dreams suffer from this," the Bird said though his black beak was closed.

"But some among us rebel," said the Lion with his mane framing his head and his teeth hidden.

"Some seek his destruction," said the Draught Horse as he adjusted his bridle and his bit.

“We cannot allow this,” the Osprey interjected. “His limitations are our strengths, and his strengths are beyond our capacity to know. We trade these things; we trade our work for his knowledge, and he trades his weakness for our righteousness. The stars have spoken for much longer than the elements they bore.

“His death will be our ruin, his death will allow the earth to be blotted out by our closest star, the one that rises in four hours, the one that sets in 1-billion breathing years,” the Osprey said.

“He alone will save us from the nova of this star?” asked the Bobcat with her head opened and shorn about the wound; the male cat nodded and placed his right paw upon her left.

“He needs us to do Good, as God asked him to do Good at one time. For all beings lose the capacity to do Good as they evolve toward the divine; as they gain the whole world this is what they lose. Man is in transition between us and the gods, and with this he loses his bodily strength, his courage; which is physical courage as all animals know. What man thinks is philosophical -or contained in the rational brain- is his courage waning,” the Osprey said and lifted each feather up to separate them; he then allowed each to return to rest.

“What is his moral code?” The Lion asked.

“It was once honor, like ours, but it has dissolved into an incantation made up of mere words now, words that my Praedæ and Ossifraga are deciphering tonight,” he said this as he passed three notes to the female birds as they landed and then alighted. “But I’ve been told these are the bones left over from the killing of first Eagle, the beast that man once was tethered to by the drunken gods,” the Osprey said as his right wing pointed to the west.

“What did his beast need?” the Horse asked. The harem of hawk held a baby bird; the Osprey called it poetry as his words were mere prose, he said. The female was math. The male was forest, the female was the path. The male drew -with left wing- a line and made an X/Y graph.

“He needed what man called, XXXX XXXXXX which -according to my sources- means, in animal languages: XXXX XXXXXXXXXX. Man has

lost this capacity now and turns to us. Man is opposed by beasts unclean, that wear the skins of man, but have the souls of prey animals; this is not as nature demands. These portmanteaux have fooled man, but they are revealed to us,” the Osprey said as his feet did not move. His lieutenant lay photos of the suspects in the snow. The Osprey did not yet point to the images laid below. The other animals lifted their heads to peek at the pictures.

“What power do these prey animals have, do the skins of predators imbue them with strength?” The Lion asked. “Is it like the red face of my Lioness? Do skins confer like Blood?”

“They have the power to invent new gods, their god is called: XXX XXXXX,” the Osprey said; more photos were arrayed. He let them align in odd shapes on the lapidary crystals, like something foreign without bramble or branch, each natural root cut short and he had no idea what an unevenly divided rectangle was.

“XXXXX,” the Horse, Lion and Bobcat said and tried to imagine its powers, and its ways. They already knew its desires. They had felt their own dreams be disturbed.

“This god has the power to do wicked and yet call it good,” the Osprey began as the large cat interrupted.

“A trickster like the Coyote?” The Lion asked.

“And it clouds the minds of men so that man sees evil as righteousness. But this god lacks heart muscle and must put man’s eyes in this breast-spot so that he sees a god with these other things,” the Osprey said ignoring his question of the Coyote because he didn’t know and didn’t want to speak on such things.

“Like Caesar who sacrificed a heartless but unknown beast, not one of ours, but one of theirs,” the Lion said as they nodded in succession like the second hand of clocks. They knew of all man’s history; they had observed and remembered nearly as long as the Crows; half that of the Whales.

“Courage from the Latin, Cor, meaning heart,” the Bobcat male said as the female sank into a defensive crouch. Explanations that went inside

her made her lower herself and growl. She saw robberies not strong but on the prowl.

“It is a heartless beast, but man has no power of sacrifice any longer, it is to us he asks. And it is to this we assent. If we have heart, if still we, the beasts -the predatory half of the forest- will do our duty,” the Osprey said and pointed to the comet that had begun to traverse the sky from over the northern tree line; he thought of how these meteor often preceded the death of noble men, and beasts, while dark skies intimated the passing of the chaff.

The Osprey couldn't decide if man had a true world inside him and this was why he needed to be both predator and prey. He didn't know how far the recursion went and if the gods had built more universes from men.

The Horse then shed its hide as the paint fell into a tangle nest of snakes; he was now like eggshell that was mottled and felled and smooth. The Corvids stretched the tarpaulin of skins under the former Horse as the egg of Asps cracked and broke open in the pre-dawn on this the equinox of spring.

The other animals side-eyed the Blackbirds and said nothing; but their distrust was in their silence; their suspicion was voiced in each word that failed to address the birds -directly- even as they made 3-stick tools on the edges of the tanned sins. They made tools that men would have understood but the predators saw only as graven images -as voodoo dolls and dream catchers- from ruined -desecrated- trees. The common Corvids had had mothers like this, dubious, and fathers who never mentioned what could be done with their surplus intelligence, only what they lacked in food for the winter and where their wings did not shade in the summer; and calling their feathers every color but true black.

They carried their preternatural intelligence stoically and refused to chastise their doubters; they had not grown into their full wing-span yet. They flew so that they would not land under Osprey and Eagles, and they nested in ragged brambles with grey leaves and the insides of desiccated fruit so as to avoid the looks from the Jaguar of jungle and Leopard upon the high-desert plain.

Tonight, they stretched ground cover tarps for the apex class of their kingdom and agreed to be ignored.

But they knew that if pressed their betters would insult them, with repeats of what they had only thought for a thousand generations, and the rebukes would go from inside the head of each of them and fill - crowd out- the air -the firmament- with so much invective and accusations so that none may in fact fly; so burdened they would die.

“Today is 21; the 1st of the 1st 88.59 of this 12,056th of the 25,772nd,” the Osprey said, “the Great Snake will now speak for the Horse and the noble mien of the wild herding animals.”

The earth had wobbled after being hit by meteor and yet no man ever wondered what that did to weather, to fire, to the iron core and the blood of the mantle. These beasts knew what shifted beneath. They saw the seas’ swallow waves. They felt what man could not obey.

From the egg rose a large Python, weighing 1.8 stone and black on one side and imbricate all over. He arched his head forward and said, “I am all muscle. I know not virtue but strength and not vice but abeyance. I lack what men call caution. The vice of caution is not mine, and never shall be, I am called by the forked lightning three days from now, and I am christened by those who know where I live inside man.

“I will not allow the fat to shed weight by respiration. I will not countenance the soft to grow rigid with rigor. I will not sanction the earth to become all compromise to the gain of those who barter in bad faith. I will go low as they pretend to be high above; as they float over their own sunken feet.”

“What has man in his chambers?” the Lion asked the Snake.

“He has swapped his instincts with reason, like embossed coins instead of food, mere abstractions as replacements for the things that man truly needs to survive. His ancient fathers carried impulses in his body, but he has thrown those out in the spring. In the autumn he burned them as leaves,” the Asp said.

“What is in man’s head?” asked the female Bobcat; a black flower with two heads each with five petals grew up through the fissures the Crows

had begun to sew up. Wasps buzzed around the flowers as the petals rose and fell. The birds came and went as the winds sank and swelled.

“An anti-nature morality; against the instincts of life. It says no both to the lowest and the highest desires of life and posits God as the enemy of strife,” said the Snake as he mockingly plagiarized one man; as that man had stolen from the snake himself many moons ago.

“What is man’s nature?” the Osprey asked the Snake.

“To tremble, and shake, and to both fear and stare too long at the Snake,” the Python said as it coiled back inside its ovum and the smaller black Asps folded over him again.

The Snow Leopard paced on the peaks to their north and the Crows let go of the hide skins and flew to spy on his gait and his form. Each animal rose from their position by the frozen fount and walked back to their places in the dark tree line many paces away.

The moon waxed crescent, and the clouds were silvery and dense against the lapis of sky. The birds seemed far from the mountain -just small dots- as the Leopard grew restless in waiting for the scrolls tied to their feet. Each word they spoke melted into feather or fur and they no longer thought in language at all.

Jack awoke but didn’t like the light of the day so he kept his eyes closed and let the lids do as much as they could. He thought of the dream but didn’t remember much. Just the animals and the weather and he then realized he could read written words while asleep.

He’d be twelve years old in minutes; seconds. He breathed, swallowed his spit, and felt something ineffable in his chest.

III. 2030 e.v.

“Well, one has renounced the great life when one has renounced war ,” the inmate said as Tania began by tagging the digital recording of their interview. The room recorded all, but the staff could tag parts for easier retrieval.

“Metaphysically?” she asked as she typed in the air above the tablet so she could see his eyes as she entered new data. A hummingbird hovered behind

her.

“I’m not certain I see the profit in separating the metaphysical from the physical. If to separate brings wisdom or insight, or some advantage in a fight -if it makes justice emerge from the seed- then maybe.

“I would separate the lid from the eye, for example, as this uncovers both the eye and the world. I would separate the sword from the scabbard, for this makes man balanced and makes war productive. I would lastly separate the wicked from the good, between and among men,” the inmate said.

“How so?” she asked as she monitored his endocrine system and the four proteins they had marked to watch their real-time coding. They had begun to be able to watch the storms inside man now, not just the surface of the planet, like when Galileo -four hundred years ago- had merely noticed the bands on Jupiter as a 2D phenomenon.

The Juno craft had observed -at the southern pole- five storms in a hexagram, spinning at 220-miles-per-hour, each over a thousand miles in diameter, and lasting for at least nineteen months. All five adhered around one larger storm. The spacecraft had entered the polar orbit and measured that the atmosphere of this largest planet was a full 1% of its mass. *This was incredible* , Tania thought. She had noted while she first listened to MO’s treatises of the Juno data.

She thought it as she monitored the inmate in the lab.

The earth’s atmosphere was one-one-millionth of its mass, but Jupiter’s storms were more -as percentage-and the *Jovain InfraRed Aurial Mapper* of the craft had shown these roiling cyclones of doom; these red and black gyres of hot and angry gas. It had shown the firmament of Jupiter made up more and more of what the planet truly was.

The storms did not merge, but stayed equidistant from their Caesar, their own magnetic pole , she thought as she watched the data stream -now of inmate 16180339- in both number and 3D avatar projected just to her 9 o’clock position from the holographic screen. She watched as his genes coded for protein expression and then reverbed back onto itself as chemicals entered each cell and were expelled; often times annealed with other *bio-chems* she had to discern. She watched in real time the precursors

for his facial expression, and the valves of his vascular arms, the forearms like trees with elevated roots digging into the soil, his sharp hand like a claw. The scar -on that hand- from the cat-scratch fifty-one years ago was -like a mid-Atlantic trench well below the sea surface- invisible to all but the *nanobots* now.

The *toxoplasma gondii* and the antibodies that followed it lay one layer down from their eyes.

She watched for the pairing of the dilation of pupils or elevation of his heart; all of which was signaled to her in milliseconds. The pings of the lab's computer and flashes of color on graphs linked to this prisoner's genome and biome as well.

He was observable from inside the outer shell, the thin veneer of atmosphere, the skin and expressed motivations stated and explained.

She would watch as he spoke, and see the correlates in endocrine and gene expression, the flux of allostatic system and deeper down interoception and deeper still, the battlefield of the immune system and the signals it sent to the central nervous system: the explosions of neurotransmitters and *anhedones* and regulation of the *thalamus* and inhibition of the *nucleus accumbens* here and there and here again. She mated natural pairs; she marked things askew and odd.

The computer recorded all its permutations and possible implications but she saw the *abstract* that adhered to her project's thesis; and what was relevant for this project only. She was tasked with educating the boys that were made of his same raw material: his genome. She was tasked with seeing what differed in them, what expressions of genes and their proteins made them different from him. *What storms*, she was asking, *did the boys have going on inside them that was unlike this man; their genomic equal and duplicate?*

She was looking for the rare, the anomalous, the 1%.

Each gene had options, an A or B available to it depending on environmental stimulus; often the environment for the gene was the landscape of the body itself; an ecosystem sealed off from the world the man himself strode through. PraXis was -she was- only watching four genes

right now, and these were the four alleles and chromosomal structures that coded for behavioral idiosyncrasies of this man; these observed genes were thought to code for the felt qualia of his response to stimuli. These genes seemed to code for his deepest motivations and threshold tolerances for ballistic action; those actions he seemed unable to recall, take back, stop; actions of the sword unsheathed and glinting in the sun or moon.

These genes made him what he was; different from other men of other moods.

The *DRD4* gene had coded for a chain of proteins that began to reveal the *LacI* repressor which bound to the *allolactose* inducer in an allosteric transition. They -her and Isaiah- had watched last week as these proteins toggled between the *LacO* DNA sequence and this *LacI* function based on their interaction with other molecules they had not yet been identified. But after nineteen minutes Isaiah had located the protein he felt was the consequent one -labeled it- and uploaded it onto Tania's tablet.

She was now looking at it in real time as the inmate spoke.

The inmate then broke off into a digression and had wondered aloud about the effect on him of books, art and cinema; he used the word *film* or *cinema* to describe movies he liked, and then the word *movie* for dross -all that demotic stuff- designed just to make money and as soporific for modern men. The inmate seemed to use this as proxy -outpost- to some epicenter of something else unnamed.

She learned his code, his *argot* ; she began to pay attention as Isaiah had enjoined her to do. He spoke in riddles, but there was a key; a legend.

She had begun to see Isaiah's point, that a man such as this was better understood by listening to one's own gut, often enough, and ignoring the math and science sometimes; for that stuff could be read and re-read later. But the man himself was right in front of you speaking as honestly as any man in a thousand if one merely paid attention right now.

The man was vulnerable and thus open to her inquisition. She could learn if she was willing to learn.

He was more like a song, not a sentence to diagram. He was, in his own odd way, closer to an artist; not merely the guy giving you directions to the

mall. She tried to listen to him as the cloud's graphs and monitors spun and rose and fell.

"But, I cannot tell if these touchstones of art emboldened me or regulated me. Were they gas or brake? It's hard to say, because I have no idea who I would be without them," he said, his hands were allowed to come to rest on the arms of the chair; but there was no slack in the dark meridian of BOP chain.

She watched the rise and fall, the spinning lottery of numbers and position of the gene along a *sine curve* and *Markov* chain; a wheel within a wheel. The algorithms all whirled at speeds ten times that of the human brain, and in parallel. She tagged a data point as he began to speak again, returning to her question of *how*.

"I would separate the wheat from the chafe, and not just among men, but inside them. For all of us have evil inside. Even you, young lady," he said with a mild smile.

"Are you angry with me?" she asked to monitor his response as it manifested upon these genes; in either case, whether angry or not.

"No, I only say that so you realize that I do not see things in others that are not also in me. I was critiquing me not you. But, I define wickedness differently. I call good what you and the devil abhor, and I call wicked what he and you exhort," the inmate said.

"What do we, the devil and I, exhort?" she said with seriousness; she was genuinely curious both at the chemical level -the penned notes- and yet still trying to listen for the chorus in the song. This man unblushingly used religious language; and not mockingly. He seemed to believe in everything in the moral universe -even God and Satan- yet could not speak of the truth of it outside the diorama he created in his words.

He'd populate his stories, his dramas, the inner lives of friends and enemies alike with each ontological set-piece taken straight from the Bible; and he would do so sincerely. Only once the game was over, and the story told, the lesson learned -the pieces going back into the box- would he -almost in passing- admit he was so made as to not be able to believe. But he would say that his belief or non-belief in the thing was no indication of its truth;

that he believed in the truth of things no matter if he -or anyone- believed that they believed.

“Reason. The devil is pure reason, and as student of revenge he uses his mind; as teacher of vengeance he has lost it. I am the heart of revenge. I and the beasts of the forest fight on God’s side, not with reason, but with instinct. Instinct is God’s first Law,” the inmate said this and held up one finger on his one hand that was now laying like a seated lion on the chair’s one arm.

“I feel like you are being vague on purpose,” she said and tried not to look at the data streaming in. She felt he got more vague as he felt she was too distant; like the way you shout single words to lost dogs & children, and only form full sentences for those you can see.

“I’m being abstruse to say -in order to say- what is in my heart, not my mind. But let me ask, have you read *A Tale of Two Cities*?” he asked.

“Oh, yeah, *the best of times the worst of times* ,” she said with a cavalier intonation that he felt annoyed by.

“Yeah, but have you *read* it?” he repeated to indicate that books were not things to be dismissed with blithe repetition of their most famous lines; but things to be delved into, to stick one’s head into like the lion’s maw, to sink hands in the entrails of; to wipe its sanguinary bits on the cheeks like war paint, and to sniff at the fur where it is both worn and warm.

He waited.

“In college maybe, or high school, but many years ago,” she said. She knew she had not -no matter what she would be able to recall or repeat- gleaned what was important to the inmate from this book. And so, she dropped her dismissive tone and decided to be honest about how little she remembered of it.

“Did you take anything from it?” he asked.

“I remember the father stood in the, or on the -*whatchamacallit* ?” she searched her mind.

“The scaffold,” he offered. But he thought of the derrick, of course.

“Yeah, and sacrificed himself for his son, or son-in-law,” she said.

“That book has many things to teach us. Can I share with you what it taught me?” he asked. He had liked her answer, but he didn’t offer any compliment.

“Please,” she was genuinely curious now.

“In the beginning,” the inmate said, “Dickens speaks of the Fates as the Woodsman and the Farmer. That the hewing of lumber, the felling of trees for the scaffold, and the use of the tumbril for clods and grains now, but bodies soon enough -capably enough, naturally enough- was occurring beyond the cities long before the deadly constructions of the Jacobin revolution were seen. See, he called it natural law, that -as Jefferson said it- that *a people so long oppressed shall not go from tyranny to liberty upon a feather bed* .”

“Thomas Jefferson?” She asked.

“Yes. That man was a radical. He was borderline maniacal. But he was a builder of things too; he was God’s law in a man; in a *portmanteau* of a man. See, this country came from great hewers of logs for the scaffold and drawers of water for the washing away of the blood. We come from violence for a purpose, not just for fucking fun. Although killing is fun for many great men and low men alike, but that is not its purpose in great men. Which is why onanism is a degeneracy, and sexual congress for procreation is divine,” the inmate said as his hands remained motionless.

“Slow down, what did the book say to you?” she asked. His digressions were like a thousand tendrils searching for water way down below the water table, and it confused her two -forward-facing- eyes.

“My point was that trying to prevent revolutions by satisfying the outrages against men with social programs or State intervention is like preventing forest fires by dousing the flames of each damn fire. Yes, it appears to work; it does stop that first fire. But all it does -ultimately- is build up the woods, from coast to coast with no boundaries, so that when the *fire next time* comes it burns the entire world down.

“Man tries to stop war -man’s natural state- with appeasements and compromises and use of both leniency and tyranny in spasms. It’s all wrong because it fails to see what man is. It all fails because it has no idea why

fires begin at all; what a fire's purpose is. Man just sees fire as bad, because it destroys. He doesn't see what it creates and illuminates.

"Fire is natural; that much man might admit. But, it also cleanses the forest and makes boundaries; boundaries which promote health. It lays nitrogen down in the soil, it promotes green; new growth. It opens the cone with its seed. This is God's law, not man's. And it is ancient, and it works.

"Man's nature is to war, he is not a cow or a ruminant. Man is pugilistic by nature, but why?" he asked.

"Greed?" she gave the answer that came to her without thinking. Isaiah had told her not to over-think.

"No. Man wars because he has honor; and he will never submit to being ruled by incompetent and dishonorable men. He won't. Now, some men will, even most men will. But that is not who matters. When I speak of *man who wars*, I speak of those who start war and drag everyone else along.

"What matters is who will, not who won't. Just like it doesn't matter how many lightning strikes do not spark in the dry places, it only matters that that one hot bolt can and that one white bolt will. One will, always. And the one that will is the one that matters. And man will always have one or two or 1-million sparks who catch the dry grasses on fire. It's an unavoidable law of God. You cannot make every man docile and gracious and thankful and weak. You cannot do it. And it only takes a few of the most aggressive men to start a war.

"And yet society tries to put down each rebellion in man; with tyranny or appeasement as if any of that matters. Until each man is sated by the order of things conflagration will always obtain, and never on earth will each man be sated by the order of things. It's not in his nature to be slaked in this way. No more than the earth will stop its need of electrical discharge that makes bolts strike the earth 8-million times and places each day," the inmate said.

"Is that right, 8-million lightning strikes a day?" she said with genuine surprise. He said indeed that this was true. She noted it and then tried to follow his analogy again. *Man's waring was as natural as lightning strikes as a way to discharge built in electrical charges, he was saying*, she repeated to herself. She compressed his many words into a few.

“How could each man feel he is in his right place, treated correctly, of the correct status? How -without struggle, fighting for it- could each man feel he had achieved the right space? Even if it were objectively true -which it never could be- man would subjectively take offense at his station and strive for one higher.

“We are designed by evolution to fight for status; not from greed but need. We have brain chemistry that needs -in order to stabilize our allostatic systems- needs -not wants but needs- to avenge all wrong done to us. We must fight against the world; kick against the pricks. This is how brains evolved; to fight, to war. This is just the planet we live on, this is what worked in a trillion trillion interactions over 4-billion years, this is what worked, ok?

“We grasp for honor in the madness of the world like a newborn feels for the tit. It -like mother’s milk- gives us succor, life, *oxytocin* and *dopamine* and the boost to our immune function. It recharges the body like storms recharge the air with negative *ions* .

“This whole world is a roiling -boiling- cavitation of both neurons and gestalt organisms that we do not yet understand. We may never understand them. We ourselves are mere neurons inside this larger system. So, at any rate, after going one way for 99.99% of life, we decide, as a culture -out of the fucking blue- to sue for peace, as if this is optimal. What if our own immune system advocated such things? What if it called for a *détente* with the bacteriophages, and the pathogens and the invasive microbial species? What then of this peace?

“What if muscles stopping breaking down, what if what those muscles moved never need moved again? What if eggs were no longer cracked, what if man no longer hungered so stuffed was he on his final meal? What does perfect satiation, and placidity and contentment actually produce?

“*So foul a sky clears not but with a storm* , the artist said. Does man -does the scientist- think that to neuter man’s marital ways is without consequence? When man is no longer allowed to exact his own retribution, is this only a good -with no down side- with no unforeseen outcome? Are you that arrogant that you think you can stop a local forest fire and not

increase the likelihood of a larger conflagration later on?" he asked with hands and arms and head relaxed.

"Well, there is a big difference between the forest and mankind," she said. The algorithmic and logarithmic data of self-organized criticality -that mapped upon both man and forest- lay upon the cloud.

"The natives -the American Indian- knew that there was no difference between the forest and man at all.

"But it took a thousand years of science to finally prove that this was true. You ought to read Mark Buchanan's book, *Ubiquity* . He lays out the power laws, the math, that shows that man and the forest are actually governed by the same fractal system; that shows that at the most basic level we and the trees are the same; that the forest and society are very similar. In both systems you cannot intervene without making it worse. For the law will always be followed, and for us to insist on climbing higher -as if one is climbing *away* - to avoid the necessary crash only makes the debris field wider. It does not mitigate the destruction at all. People think climbing higher -away from the ground- prevents a crash.

"It's absurd," the inmate said as his water sat in a Collins glass upon slab. MO leaned against the counter and listened to the inmate speak and Tania breathe in and out.

"Avoiding the crash -thinking you are avoiding the crash- by insisting on putting out each fire or preventing each man from being violent only ensures that eventually the fire will burn well beyond your ability to control. You stop man from settling scores, you insist that the daily, incessant, ubiquitous humiliations and dishonorable conditions be left to be solved by a heartless and uninterested State -if at all- and prevent man from handling his business himself, well, you build up so much goddamn fuel of unburned discord and anger and reserve energy that when it finally sparks - and it always will, remember 8-million lightning strikes a day- then the whole civilization goes up in flames.

"When you look at modern statistics, all you see is that crime is down; you see one-tenth of one percent of the consequence of the State, the modern liberal State. You measure wealth and life span and technology and this seemingly pacific sheen on the surface of society; you and that moron

Pinker measure everything except one thing: man's heart, not his reason, which is at the core of his actions. You measure what he thinks not his heart beat. You measure what man says not what he feels and thus does.

"You refuse to measure the pain, anguish, humiliation, seething rage, the bio-chemical response to never -ever- being allowed to live as a man was designed to live.

"You ever see the dorsal fin of the Orcas in captivity? How they flop over and yet SeaWorld never gave one fuck about what they did to that regal beast that they held in captivity. Think of it, a great predator like that. Shit, White sharks die in a week in captivity because they need to swim over a hundred miles a day to survive.

"Yet, you smartasses never measure the effects of domestication on man, the animal, the apex predator of man. You don't measure the cortisol, the endocrine system, the *ennui* & anomie, the indicators of social collapse and the fecund and febrile and eager conditions for *guerre à outrance* . We are men, in our hearts, we are *men* . We are not algorithms or machines. 12.5% to 15% of the world is -consists of- alpha males being told to sit down, shut up and be good. This is tantamount to putting an Orca, a White shark in a little aquarium and measuring everything but his heart; noticing everything but his bent dorsal fin, his broken *dorsal-medial PFC* .

"And that is roughly 750-million men just laying fallow and dry and vulnerable on the forest floor as you refused to allow them to discharge their energy toward the good, the righteous, even with -and I admit to the mistakes and injustices and all that- even with the down sides. But alpha males served a natural cleansing function. And yet everyone from that demented NPR crew is advocating the death of the alpha with the same glee as the idiotic hunters of the 18th century whooped and hollered with anti-Indian fervor over their eradication of the bison of the western plains.

"Alpha males took out the trash. They scrubbed clean the floor of the sociopaths and the morally weak and the stupid. All the branches and brambles and downed trees and mutant growths and other things crowding their neighbors with their invasive boughs and brushwood, all the overgrowth and diseased arboreal networks that a fire -a small, local, personal, contained fire- would clear out and revivify, is instead -thanks to

your modern State- allowed to clutter up and ruin and corrupt the forest. And this ceasefire fucking allows it to fill each natural boundary -war created boundary- with more and more encroaching fuel; more and more dangerous fuel.

“Alpha males have an instinct to beat the shit out of the worst elements of our society. They turn insults and low behavior -the disgusting and fatuous actions of the soulless- they turn that shit into a burst of violence that snuffs that shit out. And that is how man and his ancestors lived for a billion fucking years. And you and your liberal State come along and say, *oh no, we’ll handle these forest fires with our giant bureaucracy, we’ll put them out* . Well, fair enough, but look at what happens. The Forest Service figured it out real quick. State intervention in small fires was not a good idea at all.

“Juries in the south figured it out, if you look at the stats. They’d let a defendant off -more often than not- for killing a guy if the dead guy quote, *had it coming* .

“Shit, remember that guy who killed, shot -*shot* the drunk driver in the face- the drunk fuck who smashed into his kids? You remember that case? Shit, that jury let him off, they let a murderer off. Why? Because that drunk driver killed his kids man; and the father had to watch it happen. The jury saw this. The jury had heart.

“What would the State have done if the father hadn’t killed that drunk fuck? Incarcerate the drunk; lock up the drunk driver who killed two kids? Yup. That is the State’s answer. And no way, no way is that right. That ain’t justice, the father knew what justice was -it was written in his heart- he went and got a gun and blew that drunk fuck’s head off. And the jury let him off. Boom,” the inmate said and his mouth closed for a moment as Tania stared at the eyes; his words still making their way into her mind. The lab hummed with activity well below their ears and eyes. Some wasps flew out as spies. Some birds hovered just aft of Tania in a holding pattern as the red glories’ bells lay open like gramophones for their brethren to prod for dew and nectar and the music of viscous fluids.

“Let’s say we all act rationally, and act as NPR and Pinker and Harris all want us to. Say that father lets the cops handle it instead. Do you know how

that father would have felt each day, for failing to exact retribution on his children's murderer? Under a modern version where the father just calls the cops -and the drunk is incarcerated for twenty-two point two goddamn years- what has actually happened? Does anyone measure what goes on in between court dates and over and above his name on a docket? Does anyone measure a man's heart?

"So, the guy -the drunk- is arrested; so what? How is that *justice* for the man, the father, the man who just witnessed the death of his children by the dissipated, the weak, the man too low -too disgusting- to drive on our roads without murdering children; a man too stupid to handle his booze? What goes on in our hearts that this is now our world?" the incarcerated man asked. He hoped she see the sequela; all the things humans miss; he waited to see if his words unfolded -dissolved and absorbed- into nutrients like digested pieces of food.

"You can't have vigilante justice or it's chaos," she said; rebuking the meal.

"Wrong!" he barked and leaned forward and made the chains taut; the seat creak; some birds re-routed on their path. "You can't *not* have vigilante justice or it's chaos."

He calmed himself and looked at his own hands. He squeezed them and dissipated heat.

"You only measure one side of the stick. Have you ever read the story of the guy -shit, I forget- but some modern liberal journalist? I forget his name, but his father was a survivor of the Nazi camps and one day he saw a camp guard -after the war- who was free and walking around. The old Jew called the cops -like you and all you modern types want- and sure enough, they arrested the old guard and charged him and he served like eighteen months or some shit, and then the State let him go. *Time served*, they said.

"The old Jew was never the same. The young reporter, not unlike you, had to write an account of his father, as all wrought up, destroyed, by his failure -and it was a failure- to avenge himself and his fallen comrades of the *lager*. He failed to be a man. He called the cops on some scum bag Nazi and the State did what they always do: half-assed, half-hearted, nothing.

“Now you listen to me, that old man -*he knew* - he knew he should have blown that Nazi’s head off himself, like a man,” the inmate bellowed. “That is what regulates society; what regulates the forest of man. Not the incessant and limp-dick interventions of the fucking State; but men, acting as men, to right wrongs. Men -good men, men of character and pride and honor- taking out the trash and setting shit right. The State doesn’t know how handle the old Jew’s side of the equation, his inner world, his emotions and the allostatic system.

“The State just perfunctorily locks a Nazi up for eighteen months and pats itself on the back as if that is justice. But that old man is destroyed now, his life, his manhood -his Task- has been thwarted by the State. He followed the rules of *effete* modern society and it killed his soul. How do we measure that in our crime statistics? How?” the inmate asked. Her tablet sat in her lap under her hands. The cloud measured his insulin; his *mu* -*opioid* receptors. She stared at his jaw and bottom teeth, her heartrate rose 9%.

Humidity was at 44.8%. O² was at an elevated 22.1%. Temperature was 68.1 degrees.

“This is the hidden cost; and I am saying that we need to look at it. We must look at what we are doing to men when we demand that they swim in a tiny aquarium; that they live inside a little cage. Men, real men, are beasts -feral animals- that need the freedom to war against the unjust, the immoral, the sick and morally weak. We have earned that right, and the State cannot take it away; not without some massive consequences. Not without killing that species and overturning the whole order of things.

“That -the forced domestication of the male- is what is making a much larger, nastier, devastating war inevitable, lady. Your State is preventing good men from performing their God given role as avengers. And so, the wicked and weak are allowed to clutter up the forest while good men go mad from regret and self-doubt and anguish at their failure as men; as human beings. Like White sharks dying in captivity; like Orca going insane.

“Men -real men- know what their job is; God wrote it on their hearts. And it’s a conscience all right, but not some weak, nice, womanish conscience. No, it’s the conscience of a *man* . And that means that a man is magnanimous and pacific and non-violent 99% of the time, but when he

sees true malevolence and true disorder, and true chaos, he doesn't call the fucking cops like some fucking female. He handles it like a man. And this solves the problem, permanently; and it makes him feel righteous again. It solves the problem on both sides of the equation, not just one.

"A man's skin is a boundary, and both sides need policed.

"It restores order, not just by extirpating the criminal, the lawless offender, but it restores the allostatic system of the male, so he can carry himself with pride again and be a useful member of society again. This is necessary for all the peaceful days he must do his civilian job, care for his family, and be good to his neighbors. If you take that righteous violence from him, so he cannot discharge that natural energy and natural need -a need as natural as sex or breast feeding or exercise- then he is diminished as a man for all days -all days- not just that one day where he failed to do his duty," the inmate said. His own murders flipped through his head not as memories but as duties; not as vengeance but as penitence.

She was watching his *dmPFC* and its activation under his modeling and abstraction. He was not wrong about the effect on that region of the brain that aggression provided the animal and not just for that interaction but going forward. Righteous -what the inmate would call righteous- aggression was likely to make an animal -from mice to men- more confident, more belligerent and then smoothly rise in the hierarchy.

The cloud gave her data -uploaded to the tablet and to her sequestered coder- one degree to each side of his current metabolic state.

"Like that old Jew who regretted his failure the rest of his days, men who fail to seek and exact vengeance for wrongs committed against them never recover. And their failure to recover means you have 12.5% of your population -your biggest trees- out there as feral, fallow, dried out, dangerous fuel just waiting for the next spark to ignite them and burn this whole fucking civilization down to the roots.

"Look, you've got clutter of the immoral and weak and stupid, who reproduce exponentially as they are fed and have their asses wiped by the State, and they scam and lie and behave like scum and are allowed to proliferate as men can no longer eliminate them. So, on both sides of the equation, the State is putting out these natural fires, and allowing fuel to

build up; fuel in the form of disgusting immoral men who get away with the shit they'd used to get beat to death for, and in the form of alphas who used to have confidence and have their tension released, now all pent up, half-crazed and enraged and depressed and volatile. But, it looks all pretty and nice at first, if you just measure crime rates and wealth and life span and blah blah.

"It's like measuring the stock gains between crashes and thinking the way we run the banks is sane. The crashes are the important part. You can't say, *well we made money twenty-two out of twenty-three years*, when in the year you don't make money you actually lose more money than you've ever made. Yet, this is how we measure things and it's beyond stupid.

"It's corrupt and it's a lie," the inmate said as MO stolidly added food to the 10-liter fishbowl he had made in the shape of rising coy as the *Black - Oranda* goldfish swam in helix around the falling grains. MO reflexively measured their topography and weighed them and the water both. He let the inmate use words like '*always*' and '*never*' and '*truth*' and '*lie*' like one allowed a painter to use black and white oils or a polygraph participant use '*yes*' or '*no* .'

"We are heading for a massive civil war because the scumbags -scheming & plotting- are gossiping and shit-talking and are yapping like tiny dogs provoking the big dogs. And the big dog is held in abeyance on this leash by some goddamn liberal pet owner that lets that little stupid dog disrespect her big badass dog. And the dog park seems placid and modern and epicene. But that big dog is dying inside. That big dog is pulling against that thin leash and howling like a wolf.

"The State is allowing this shit, they are allowing the alpha male -the species that built this whole civilization, that did 80% of the work, the necessary work to build the West- the State is allowing them to be dishonored by low and disgusting men and mouthy broads.

"This won't go on forever, eventually the alpha male will push back. He must. It's a law of nature. You cannot hold him on a leash forever; and yet this is what all you people think. You think peace is permanent due to the efficiency of the State. You trust the leash.

“You people are playing with fire, and you think you are being cute and clever and *oh, isn't peace and prosperity so nice?* Well, it is nice until you look at all that shit on the forest floor you don't want to look at. It's nice until one spark sends it all to Hell.

“You don't know the power laws involved in regulating these phenomena. You are insouciant to it. But, from avalanches to forest fires to man's revolutions, it is all regulated by the same mathematical god. It's all wound up and unleashed by the Fates. The Woodsman; to quote Dickens, the Farmer, Death.

“You can't stick your arm in the clockworks to delay the machine's movements,” he said as he saw the man's arms hewn by the cogs, the blood trail to the office at Owen's Corning, the flame of the acetylene torch, the remorseless advance of the clockworks and gears. The slag turn neon red and drip to a roan grey.

“It will jam for a second, and then chew right through the bone in your arm. Men need wars, daily. Men need personal -meaningful- wars against the things that offend them, against the men who injure them, against the ideas that abrade them. Men -flesh and blood men- need personal wars. They are warrior-like by nature, by dint of God's law; you well know it's in the DNA, from *MAO-A* genes to *DRD4* and on and on.

“And if you stop them; if you stop warriors from small and righteous wars -small-scale and justified wars- and tell them they cannot do battle with their natural enemies and that they need to be nice and let liars and cuckolds and fraudulent men get away with their perfidy and insults, then you are not *solving* problems of violence, you are merely delaying them.

“All you're doing is building it up and making the power of the delayed violent chaos so large you won't fucking believe it when that cogwheel rolls its cart, its tumbril right over your bones,” he said as he lowered the head and closed his eyes and tried to see black, banish images, calm his own inner visions with darkness and the quiet of the lab.

“There is a war coming lady, because the State has allowed the country to be filled up from coast to coast with the worst sort of men: the weak, the sub-clinical criminals who just lie, cheat and steal a little bit -just a little bit each day- so as to not be prosecuted. The West is being filled with those

scum that fall through the cracks of the State's enforcement infrastructure. Look at Europe with its filthy Muslims and African freaks who are raping white women with impunity as white men have to look on with their hands in their pockets as the State doesn't do shit.

"Blacks in this country rape 30% of all white women. That is a DOJ fact. I didn't get that from the Daily Stormer. Black men are 5% of the population and yet they are the ones raping 30% of white women. Eldridge Cleaver admitted they do it to get revenge on the white man. And yet, here we are. Here we are told that white men are the problem, and that blacks are so oppressed. Fuck that, they are the oppressors and the State is preventing us from cleaning house. Well, I say, you want a race war, you'll get one.

"As long as you prevent white men from defending their women; their own honor, you'll get a war you won't believe.

"Instead of natural law, we get the State allowing Muslims in *Rochdale* to rape children, and then walk free; allows dishonorable men, allows little dogs barking at the big dog because the leash, *the leash* is what saves them. Well, the State is the thin and weak leash on the big dog, but that leash ain't natural law; it ain't as sturdy as you think. Anything that ain't natural law begins to strain and wear out and break. Man makes nothing that lasts more than a day.

"A reversion to the mean is coming," the inmate said as he leaned back and stretched his back and neck; each were hurting now as the analgesics were wearing off. His jaw hurt at the joint on the right side; his ribs hurt in three places; his knees burned, his right foot arch felt stabbed, his deltoids burned, his gums stung, the scalp too felt hot and tender and raw.

"But, I'm just blowing off steam, huh? I'm just some convict, some murderer who ain't as smart as you scientists and doctors and blah blah. I'm just shooting the breeze here ain't I? But, you tell me what my *dorso-medial PFC* looks like under the Klieg-lights," he said. She wrote down a few phrases and then looked up at him as she noticed the long pause in his monomaniacal rant.

He opened his eyes and watched her eyes stare back at him.

She looked just to the right of the nose at the scar; he was quiet and she heard the HVAC hum and rattle as it shut off; she saw shadows move left to right from the LEDs over the ivy and felt -in the fluid in the ears- the barometric pressure drop just slightly. A few foraging bees that had been stationed to her six flew off and she felt a small shiver in her spine.

“Every wind shook the scarecrows in vain, for the birds fine in song and feather took no warning,” he said and again closed his eyes to breathe. His lids allowed the lab’s lights to create patches of red to get through; he saw fires jumping up and up and away. He felt wind, hot air, on his face.

Isaiah stood in the corner like the 13th *stele* and did not move at all.

IV. 2039 e.v.

He was last in the last truck.

All twelve up-armored HMMWV snaked through the part of I-25 North that vivisected wide and dry plains; rotten and abandoned shit that had been kept close to the highway like dirt caught in a half-healed wound. The dark scar that ran all the way between the eastern edge of the state of Colorado now had a long bright-headed and red-tailed microbe running through it like a parasite in the unguarded vein.

Road noise was low, the diesels ran at 3,000rpms, the men slept if they could. The *Wolves* that were awake were quiet and only Paul -riding shotgun in the lead H1 equipped with engines modified by Isaiah to run at 1,001 horsepower and 1,500ftlbs of torque- was still taking real-time updates on the traffic patterns and law enforcement presence at the Governor’s mansion in Denver at Logan and 8th.

He watched the satellite images and the street cameras they had commandeered. His *Mannaz* tattoo was uncovered and his forearms were ragged with veins and scratches from the forest and the dogs. His throat was tight and his knuckle hurt when he squeezed them around the pen. He put down things in semaphore, he wrote poetry for his wife. He sent word to his brother and squinted his eyes at the lights ahead. *Anyone can have the courage to die, the real courage comes when you decide to truly live,* Paul thought.

Matthias drove the fourth slant-back truck and chewed on pemmican as he watched the rear quarter panel of the No. 3 truck. His dreads draped his arms and lay with bent ends on the console and his seat; his hands lay on the wheel as his tattoos illuminated like beacon under the intermittent glow of the lights from the highway's overhead signs. His navigator handed him water every few miles; he turned his coder off and let the dark road frame the truck in front. Only the lead and drag truck had their main lights on. The ten trucks in between just had their running lights lit like orange reflectors; like stardust between larger celestial bodies.

It looked like a 12-segmented centipede from above, as the *Landsat9* upstairs captured them all as one phenomenon among a trillion disparate things to its one panoptic eye.

Matthias thought of the vacuity of life and thought maybe the snuffing out of it in others is all that gave one purpose any more. Endless survival was like a prison life-sentence to him and death was not something that happened but something one did. He watched the light bar on the No. 1 vehicle light up the road ahead like a mounted solar-flare and he saw how the ditches and barriers and cars they passed -like they were standing still- all seemed white in color and -like the diesels- about to catch fire from compressed heat.

A coyote -to lee side- turned from the delta of white light twenty-five meters ahead and the fur mottled in hazy illumination and turned black in clear shadows. Matthias's eyes darted to it as it ran back west in a skulking crouch. Signage for Pueblo, and then Denver reflected in a pastiche of white and silver from the background of luminescent green metal on their right. The vibration of the road and wheel-bearings rattled his bones in the knees and mandible held tight.

His jaw hurt. The elk-jerky soothed it by pressing on it and keeping the aching consistent in *lieu* of the natural pulse of pain that attends the empty -unemployed- mouth. Matthias was a man who could choose between troubles; and knew the nuance of ache like the artist knew dozens of names for one color in the average man's eyes; like the Inuit knew 180-types of snow. He was a man who knew each degree of the full canopy of winter

when *homme sensuel* knew only the one and zero of the hot and cold pelagic layer of air.

Jack Four stared to the starboard and saw the No. 1 truck's lights as more remote; forty-five meters ahead. His rear red-lightbar didn't bleed into his vision ahead. The eastern plain was dark and flat and anything human was hidden far off the highway by now. Nobody lived or worked along the interstate anymore; everyone was dug into the western hills or down underground of the eastern flat. He was surprised they passed any cars at all on this 250-mile trip.

He saw topography rise and fall as the road ran a 5-degree grade like a fever here and there; then turn in wide bends like the way his Starr's arms would make circles when she danced for him. She bent in elegance, she returned to straightness with mechanical ease; she made geometrics as if she too knew the math. And he saw her out in the dark and then inside when his own reflection in the wet window showed him his own face. He saw her kiss that face and hold it in her little hands.

And just then he knew she was pregnant and he felt a cool river of adrenaline douse him as he handled an internal pressure that leaned on him to turn the mission around. It bounced in him like something hot and ragged, but he belayed it immediately and made sure to message Paul *via* their personal channel that he was fine. Sometimes Paul could get signals *via* their coders that Jack was upset or feeling electrically or chemically odd and so Jack now reassured him any time he had any extreme feeling outside parameters.

Paul would often -and did now- just send back a double click -as was their signal that he got the message- and Jack told himself again that they ran no risk tonight. His *attaché*, the Sgt-at-Arms, Renvara, was asleep up front. It was his only sleep in the last thirty hours as they prepared for this trip. The driver was a deaf-mute that was communicated with *via* the coders issuing light signals and building images with sonar like dolphins do; and so Jack could whisper to himself and be unheard by the other two men in the truck riding drag.

"There is zero chance of trouble for us," Jack said to himself as he held his carbine to his body armor and chest rig. His hands were swaddled in the

black of taut gloves and his thin wrists had a chronometer on each side, one ticking like *une pendule* set to MST and one set to GMT like the *horologe* of a ship in the port of Leith.

He imagined the trucks encircling the mansion and the local law enforcement being ill-equipped to deal with their assault. He would see the tracers from the *fifty-cals* as comet tails landing in a fusillade on a small planet with no atmosphere; the glass and metal would make noise in between recoil and hot-loaded shells; he would hear the report of the rifles combining from truck No. 3 and No. 9 and individual cracks of the snipers when men appeared in windows or behind cover. The Governor's protective detail would give themselves away with the muzzle flashes of their own return fire as it all would spark in the dark of a 0404 Denver morning.

Jack saw it as premonition but also as *fait accompli* .

He knew how it would go, and he was right. Nothing could stop them now. They were the opposite of the State. The State had to be everywhere and had to be vigilant and expecting doom. But the State depended on people being scared of it, and so they were insouciant and merely -lazily- standing guard all the time. They didn't expect four-men in each of the ten trucks between lead and rear, and the three men in the lead and last trucks to arrive at four in the morning -with two belt-fed M2 machine guns- unloading over 6,500 rounds into the façade of the Governor's mansion and rip-saw the portico in half as it crushed the M5s and men in black suits and black shoes below it in the black night.

They didn't expect anything at all.

Jack could see the warm amber glow of the early morning window on the western effacement of the second story of the mansion on Logan. They had watched the Governor rise at 0330 each morning for months, they had watched as he stood in that window each morning for ten minutes between 0400 and 0410 like the ancients watched the stars behave in the sky like nothing did on earth: consistently.

And Jack could see that they'd would set a perimeter around the residence, as they located the target and pulled the No. 3 and No. 9 truck in front. He could see the other trucks then pull the second half of the circle back to set a crescent at 0401 and set snipers just back from each side window. They'd

watch Boyd Sou turn the yellow window half dark with his silhouette. The men in truck three and nine would pop the top of their respective H1's and let the hydraulics raise those *fifty-cals* up out of the portal like a claw unfurled from a cat. The belt of ammunition would lay on their left leg and the down into the cans.

Paul's No. 1 truck would set outside the garage with the two-truck to cover any escape *via* that egress. Jacks' No. 12 truck and the eleven-truck would sit at a 45-degree to the window and watch the southwest door. Jack would watch the muzzle-flashes like elliptical meteors and presage of the death of a great foil and foretelling of a new age.

Jack would feel the concussion from the expanding rounds and see the house lights be blown out. The electrical system of the house would go down as the block's transformers were detonated at the same time. But his eyes would record the exact moment when the Governor was hit with nine 12.954mm-diameter rounds to the chest and head from the truck-gunners. Jack's coder would scan -as he would not see behind the window- that a small woman -likely Rachel- was hit four times in the leg and belly too. He'd be able to see the cavities made by the ballistics, the way the tissue and cells shocked out and then rebounded in space. He'd see the blood heat up and sear, the bones break and fragment around organs that blew up like their own inner bombs. He felt now and would know then, that neither would survive their wounds. He'd hear the metal clips of the ammo-belt jangle and ping like children's jacks on the ground. He'd smell the smoke from the ordinance and the hear the building drop pieces off from the soffits and ledges around windows.

Comms from the tribe's men would come *via* DM.

The Governor's and Rachel's bodies would be ripped apart like tea-stained paper folded over and torn in fours. They'd be shredded as quickly and thoughtlessly as the disposal of an errant note or long number series one no longer needed any more.

The mansion would be so frayed from the fire, and so many people - nineteen staff and eight law enforcement- would die that it would be razed in the coming weeks as the National Guard was called out. The Lieutenant Governor would assume the role.

But that was still two hours away and the night reflected back more and more into the glass he tried to stare past only to keep seeing his own face. The 38” tires hummed, the diesels sang out at a consistent *rpm* and the road felt like a buoyant sea. His scar on the face to the jaw was hidden in the shadow of the transparent echo of image. His teeth hidden under the lips, his eyes -for a moment- beneath the lids.

For now Jack Four had blocked Isaiah’s search.

Isaiah -despite the lack of data- thought the convoy was too obviously weird among the traffic of the night. He focused on it and enhanced the satellite imaging. And even though Isaiah couldn’t get a read on Jack, he knew that argosy was some giant insect crawling up the arm of the state to bite the Governor himself. He knew it even though the inside of each segment of these trucks was opaque. Despite all that was unknown of the inner workings he knew the intent of the organism itself.

Isaiah stared at the digital images as the centipede passed cars at 98mph with a sidewinder motion, as if each truck, each man, was all one organism here at 0200 and still a hundred and ten miles from the Governor’s home.

“You want coffee?” MO asked and Isaiah said that he did.

2. Masculine Skye

Nobody with the slightest spark need suffer one moment's oppression in this world The Mosquito Coast [Theroux, Paul]

Backing down from a challenge in honor cultures has negative consequences. People use insults to probe for weakness.

Why Honor Matters [Sommers, Tamler]

God speaks first in one way and then in another, but no one notices. He speaks by dreams, and visions come in the night when slumber comes on mankind Job 32:6 [King James Bible]

I. 2036 e.v.

The earth was a feminine, fecund -whole- white.

The sky he saw was a masculine and hard -perfect- emptiness.

The sun bore down like a weapon on the already dead snow as the adamantine *azul* reflected a blue-hue that -like a predator with its head up and insouciant- admitted of nothing below: no white snow, no red -but dead- lover, and no evidence of its own mortality, which on this day -the winter solstice- was exactly nine hours away.

The world shared his mien, his philosophy, he thought, *it was his turn to be right. The zero rocks entered the hot 100 sky* , he said to himself -and saw- inside.

He felt the infra-red heat, the tinge of the far end of the spectrum colored him, he made eye contact with God as he debated which words of His were for him and which were for the herd out and down below.

The red of the dawn was due to the Rayleigh Effect, the low arc of the elliptic scattering light at an oblique angle to the sky's particles along the red and orange spectrum, the far end, just in from *infra-red* . He knew this and he knew what it meant for how all things were perceived. Things at dawn were colored similar to things at dusk and all due to the same arc of their star.

“An hour into its life, the form begins to plan for a future it cannot have; and fails to plan for the future it steps right into; first with its eyes, then its mind, and then its all too sure feet,” Blax said as he took another warm drink from the comforting cup he palmed with his right hand.

He exited his perch from the crow’s nest of the compound, walked downstairs and climbed into the grey H1 and drove to the peak of H.M Pass; a full 13-clicks from the perimeter of their R & S. His coffee sloshed slightly in the console holder. He arrived just at 0808hrs and exited the truck. He walked to the edge and stared over all that land and sky.

His mind filed with *Soffia Scicolone* loitering at the peak of *St . Gottard* pass; he strained his eyes at the horizon from the continental divide. He let his eyes lay hands on the entire landscape that stretched out from this 10,900ft apex and knew -as she knew- that he could not go home until things were very different about him or about the country from which he was exiled. He imagined the land beyond the horizon and its analog among his internal landscape.

What lay beyond what was known, he asked himself, beyond what was seen of both countries ?

Even with the *nano-implants* and consciousness augmentation/suppression therapy so much of his original DNA and behavioral impulses were opaque to him. The more he learned the less he could say was his own; and yet, it was all -and always- him at the core. *For who but he chose each upgrade; then chose each step back toward the unimproved?*

He felt a slave more and more.

He felt formerly a slave to the State and corporate chimera -the hawk head and body of a dragon- that he still believed he fought. He now saw himself more and more a revealed slave to the idiopathic impulses of his DNA that bribed him with fiat currency of salience, valence -he flinched as he used that word, homonym to ideas he banished as protectant to she and he both- with the DNA that blackmailed him when the bribes didn’t work. He was held hostage with manufactured evidence of some *inflagrante delicto* that shamed and pained him and was hidden only until his extortionists revealed his weaknesses to the world.

But, he thought, this was a black analysis, too mordant, and it didn't acknowledge the near boundless liberty he had fought hard for and won over the last twenty -shit, almost forty- years . He almost said sixty years , as if it was his entire life -as he was prepared to say he had been born this way- but it stuck in the throat and would not pass.

He was as free as any man in any epoch, on any planet, with some of the most sensitive receptors for liberty in any beast; and he needed to balance his trenchant realism with awareness of just how far he'd come. Not only because it would bolster his spirits; *but because it was true* , he thought.

And was freedom the only metric? Who but the slave even thinks of liberty? he wondered to himself in immediate -togglng- self-rebuke.

He was obsessed with the tethers, but might man not need something oppressive -like gravity- to make him actually move with more speed and control? He watched how a man with the fetter of his own mass ran fast and dexterously and how the moon-walkers -unencumbered by such forces- moved slowly, and stupidly along. He repeated things: words, ideas, conceits; all in reflex, like daily chores, like ritual, like offerings to the gods when the stars aligned and the clouds' shadows moved into position on the ground.

Even now the dyad fractured again into a smaller and further fractal schism. He had learned that his maternal and paternal DNA fought inside him like two Jacobite factions; two internecine rivals of the same clan. All his authenticity, his gut feelings, were directives from some star-chamber of the genome, he had come to believe. *And his mother's genes, they were the most corrupt and weak faction*, he assumed. *His father's at least had some will to power, some insistence on honor*, he thought as if this was a starting point.

It occurred to him that the Scottish counter to precedent in English common law is what sowed the seeds for their -his people's- own destruction. He saw some kind of clustered bloom.

He re-read a *communiqu é* from a friend of his, a woman, who had been more honest than 99% of mankind. She had revealed things he -to this day- felt were vulnerabilities only the truly religious and honorable would say aloud. He let the *Landsat8* images track her, so he could keep himself

apprised of her 20; he'd need her whereabouts for when her exfiltration would be required. It would be then that she would see they were indeed friends.

He re-read it now in his mind:

At heart of everything I learned was the vital importance of reclaiming my ancestry. To grow roots, I first had to acknowledge that my family lines had been uprooted, and that even four hundred years -in the case of the branch of my family tree that arrived on the Mayflower- is not long, compared to the thousands of years it took for my ancestors to co-evolve with their native places.

Further, I saw that, at Zendik, I had truncated my tree even more, by trading my own family of origin for Wulf's and Arol's: they were allowed to talk about their lives before Zendik; I was not. They were sanctioned to speak of their ancestry; I was not.

And so, depending on how you look at it, I either erased my history up to October 26th, 1999, or I replaced it with a lineage extending back to Wulf's birth, in 1920, or, in a much hazier way, to his ancestral origins in Cherokee territory and the Wuppertal Valley of Germany.

Zendik, like America, demanded that I surrender not only my autonomy but also my ancestry; and I see now, because my grip on my ancestry was already quite tenuous, I had little trouble meeting this demand.

I also see now that Zendik -like America- thrives on rootlessness...as its own loose soil washes out to sea.

Blax let those grand and tragic words sink like seeds into his wetware of soil of mind. One of the most tragic figures of his cosmology; one of the most catastrophic and valuable of the earth; she spun out there beyond the star walls.

Blax rooted for her and Gregg to grasp hands in the nebulae, the hurricane, the war to come.

But, genes are not people, he thought as he swung away from Helen toward his own lineage, and maybe his mother -as weak and frightened as she was- maybe his mother carried a bundle of genes that had been smuggled in from

the forty-fivers who landed in New Zealand with those Scots expelled to the south of the colonies and the south island of the antipodes.

What bottom did man reach without Sherpa of Satan? he asked himself as the memories and landscape bloomed from these mottled -scored- seeds.

Maybe she had bequeathed him his gestalt intransigence and fractured, cellular, heroism; and not his father at all. It was so hard to tell because of the nature of genes that go unexpressed in the parent -like known but hidden secrets- but are flush and piquant in the scion. He had had Isaiah invigilate his genome for answers and they had come up with many more hydra-headed questions, of course.

His mind populated with the data from the ENCODE project outlined by Nessa Carey, and how *for each fifty words of junk there is but one letter of sense* .

...a third of protein-coding genes also produce junk RNA from the anti-sense strand. However, the anti-sense is usually produced at lower levels, often no more than 10 percent. Sometimes the anti-sense is just a short internal section of the gene. Other times the sense and anti-sense may start and end in different places so that they overlap but also have unique regions. Sometimes the machinery copying the sense DNA strand into sense RNA crashes into the machinery moving the in other direction to create anti-sense RNA.

“Do you believe in free will,” they had asked a man. “Of course, I have no choice,” the man had replied, Blax thought now as rejoinder to the demands the information made on his *limbic* regions of brain.

And free will meant the ability to hate. For hatred is the one thing that could bring down the order of things; hot hatred is what made space for other things to grow. He thought, *without hatred there was no love, without malice, no good was ever done. Without Satan what on earth would God have to -be able to- do?*

The thought of the location -the limitation- of mankind's *bête noire* did not occur to Blax just then.

It -hatred- is what got him out of bed in the morning, and he had said so as the facile liberal world of hippies and their insistence on shallow love

bleated on and on as if they knew one goddamn thing of love at all. A man without avowed -articulated- and blackened hatred is a man devoid of the red semiotic -feeling- of love, Blax thought.

He swallowed this line of thought as the white winter landscape of ranchland and punctuated metropolises lay seemingly inert in front of him. This was a view he was usually sheltered from -all the Jacks were- from the elevation of their own land. He had to drive up here to see the city and the lowlands, *there was no irony down there, he thought, just sarcasm; the poor-man's irony. But he didn't mean poor, he meant corrupt.*

Sides had been chosen by people with unreflective, manichean hearts, people with maps that they would never change. *They'd change the landscape -by any means necessary- to fit the map before they'd change that flat, compressed, 2D image in their brains, he thought. And his enemies would not share his self-reflection or its corollary hesitation.*

They -modern man- would burn the forests of the world before they'd amend their own maps to admit of the location of the unknown trees.

He could see both sides of any argument, but that was not a good trait when intertwined with one's rival snakes. Doubt and self-critique were useful -invaluable- up here, when alone, when safe; when God wasn't being propitiated by the Devil about his plans for *Job* .

The 99% had no way to even see how full-of-shit they were, and they literally couldn't take in information -no matter how true- if it contradicted their biases and views. He could. But only between extremes.

Zero or one, over-it or overcome, ending or just begun.

But he could not afford the payments on a house divided , he thought. Even his friends would call him *ponderous* . He'd tell long stories to reveal brief caveats; he'd add details that made it harder to tell what he thought.

When he left this zenith, he had to become a monolith of certainty again. His dreams infected his language, his metaphors; in the night he spilt wine on his maps.

Up here he could be racked with self-doubt; but down there, down there he must act with impunity and clarity even, especially, in the face of so much doubt. "*Nobody* , *Louis Antoine de Saint-Just* had said, *can rule guiltlessly*

,” he quoted aloud. The ears heard what the section of mind walled off from the *audio-cortex* could not get *via* silent thinking. He thought of Dennett and pages 195-6 of the 15th printing of the first paperback edition -as it appeared in mind- and he ruminated on what it said.

This would surprise mankind, that the only way to get info to certain sections of the CNS was to hear it; often from the king or shaman; but even from one’s self. People had no idea that the brain was not linked internally; that the *audio cortex* was often the only way to reach certain sections of the brain that connected to *motor-cortical* action. Talking to one’s self was not crazy at all. It was essential. And it was why for all of mankind’s tenure on earth man -literally- heard voices and mere thinking was not even close to being enough.

This was why *rational man* was a joke; he didn’t understand the machine itself. Imagine a mechanic telling you what fuel to put into an engine when he doesn’t even know the difference between glow plugs and spark plugs; and how diesel is different than gasoline.

He saw cherry blossoms in his mind; and real crows flew from the ground. The sand scattered on sliprock, the cracks went down to black.

He felt he was atop the pillars the Shaolin train upon; he now feared to move. He pulled on his ear lobes and felt the *earlets* black that widened the old piercing gap; he saw similarly adorned and mutilated ancestors propitiating the lost god’s for more and more clearly audible words. The black continuous-rings jangled just a bit in the dark bushings.

The wind blew up here around the knees and the light dust swirled just off the ground.

“Japan -in the 1850’s- was under the reign of the *Tokugawa* shogunate,” Isaiah had told him; and he heard it now aloud in the ears. He recalled the memory *via* vibrating ear bones; three hammers on three anvils about the canal. Blax thought too -reflexively- of the 250 years of Japan’s isolation until Commodore Matthew Calbraith Perry had landed on the coast in his black ships. The isolation, the self-improvement -the time of exile- appeared in his mind but he had no infrastructure for it; it was merely an idea, it had no flesh upon those island bones.

But the whalers -the fishery being the reason for the Commodore's arrival- populated his mind with mariner visages, and necks under those -and ribs below that- and feet upon which he then could tread. He -in this reverie- could now walk their own 19th century whaling ships as they -the vessels- rose and fell in the docks of the *Kyoto* and *Edo* regimes.

He saw ships and the island was background. He saw the men; and the society -too- was out of focus. He had not yet learned of the terms.

Blax had inside him a hidden quote from *Kimitake Hiraoka* -that Isaiah had implanted in the *broca*'s region- that could only be unlocked *via* the *audio-cortex* . These cyphers of terms must be uttered to be heard; heard to be thought; thought to be understood. It lay there like an egg waiting to be warmed with hot breath of a mother's songs. Blax couldn't hear it, for his mouth would not say it, for his mind would not think it, for his ears would not hear it. It said: For forty-five years I struggled to resolve this dilemma by writing novels. The more I wrote the more I realized words were not enough. So, I found another form of expression.

He had not yet learned that the Japanese had beaten the Chinese -in war, thus honorably, thus fairly- and not yet learned that the Japanese had had the Russians and Germans and French tell them they had no right to *Manchuria* or *Port Arthur* ; and thus had their earned spoils taken with a pat on the head; some cynical deal offered, some legal theft thus sanctioned. Blax had not yet been told of how old his own usurpations were; how ancient his native instincts -precursors- for revenge thus were. He still felt *sui generis* .

Blax -by design- still felt alone. He thought his ache for unquenched revenge was just -merely- for his enemies he'd earned in this one life.

Blax barely knew -details are like whispers- that the Chinese admiral committed suicide; and that the Chinese would not have a blue-water navy for a hundred years after Japan routed them. Japan only lost 1,431 men in combat with the Chinese. And yet the western powers dictated to them the terms of victory; not defeat.

Blax *na ively* -shallowly- though that he was the only one to succeed and still have it all taken away.

His endocrine system -in concert with his augmented cognitive capacity- made him just insouciant enough to act in the absence of a complete picture. His aggression and native hostility and arrogance made it easy for him to hate people for all their flaws. And his CNS made these flaws bloom like large, flesh-red, vernal flowers for his landing hornet of hatred. He wanted to hurt people; to this he would admit. But, it was not a lie to say he was nervous about such cathexis and dreams.

He felt he wanted to provide bio-feedback not merely for the pleasure of dominance -which he surely felt- but to teach them a lesson, and then shape the debris -this spare-parts world, this junk yard- in his own image. He tore down so as to build back up. He saw himself -not completely wrongly- as an edifying man; he had the native talents and the requisite discipline and had put in the time and effort to learn things that escape the young or the average man. But he was no natural leader of men; he lacked one ingredient.

One cog of his wheel was missing and this stopped and clogged and jammed the clockworks in time.

The world as it was bothered him; like loud noises or the olfactory affront of the stench of piling up garbage. The way people behaved, dressed, spoke and the cultural phenomena, the post-genetic phenomena they countenanced with their votes, their dollars -their memetic reinforcement- all abraded him. And he -he reasoned, justified- had evolved from merely controlling his immediate surroundings to attempting to exert his influence over an entire bio-region all because he had worked as a genetic paradigm to behold. *He -his body- had worked* , he thought as both meanings of that word took up equal space in his intent.

Work thus worked as that most faceted of words.

“Karma, means *work* ,” he said aloud.

Nobody, he thought, *who hadn't worked until their body failed had earned the right to be exemplar to anyone else . He was first a worker, and this is what made him a man. If he would be father to boys, to men, his body would have first had to be disciplinarian to itself with labor. And yet nobody -but him , he felt- today believed this to be true; for work was the first thing - smart and wised-up - men nowadays avoid.*

Think of how much work is avoided and lamented and left undone, he thought.

He looked at the modern man as useless and stupid in body -which infected and dulled his mind- no matter how facile -swift- with words that man may in fact be. Here his ability to see nuance withered a bit; here is where he could be less aware of what others do and do well; this -the earth itself might conclude- might have been his optical blindspot. *The modern man*, he went on in his head, *had no right to lead a school field trip let alone a country or a nation of men. All modern leaders were bourgeois through and through*, and he hated them as much as they hated him.

The leaders on the Left -mostly- and the Right -almost entirely- hated the working-class and it showed .

This made Blax so angry he could taste the metal in his mouth; he didn't mind people being soft and stupid as long as they knew that they were in fact beneath the strong and wise worker; as long as they knew their place. He liked prey animals, as long as they knew they were in fact prey; as long as they supplicated.

"But they didn't," he said. *These people thought they were above Blax and his Jacks; thought that the working man was somehow beneath all their contempt.* That was the line they crossed that incurred his wrath; he insisted on that. He would not admit he hated -in body- first and found *reason* -second- to hate. He thought vaguely of his Jacks -his men- but his eyes stared straight ahead to Denver now and the Governor's mansion appeared in his images and it was peopled with staff and warm inside and filled with smells of food and sounds of women. He heard the clink of small things; the ticks of old-fashioned clocks; tires of cars on the driveway's rocks. He heard the range blow gas and light a blue flame under copper pots of rice and beans and greens.

Blax would not think of the man -the Governor- himself.

He'd not kill the man, the Governor, no, Blax thought, *he'd tear his world apart and let the Rex live in that ruin.* Blax's hands didn't even squeeze. His jaw refused to freeze. The tongue lapped at the back of the too-white teeth. He had no idea how long ago the war between them had begun; and even if he had, it would be true that it began a million years before even that.

He thought of the way others spoke roughly of him and his Jacks and it made him want to speak kindly of others; others undeclared in this fight; it was as if he might need to recruit them to his side. *All types of men are needed*, he then thought.

Blax then admitted the man who worked with his mind -not his hands- did build grand things too. *But he*, he thought -as he stared out and saw the heat of the sun fall in layers as wide as the horizon on this phase of the great frozen waters, the whole forest occulted with snow- *but, that man needs to know his place, and he need know that the worker -the hard man, the rough man, the man of pain and burden- he needs to know that that man has more wisdom in his compressed vertebrae and dense muscles than the college-educated guy has in all the atomic space of his whole body and mind.* He thought this as the snow began melting and fell in a clump close to him from a bough that rose and bounced from the relief.

He thought of the educated man's capacious mind. *It too held vigil in many rooms to our Father's home*, Blax thought and felt ashamed of being too black and white once again.

"I want to make sane and beautiful, ethical and inspiring, all that I can see from my perch," he said aloud. And that statement was 66% true. He realized he had a smooth grey rock in the left hand; it lay at the first bend from the palm; surface tension held it there. His palm had horizontal lines from the womb-grip, the rock too had veins running the same way.

From this elevation, he could see for many, many miles in each cardinal direction. *Baudelaire* had similar designs on Nature; his *Eloge du Maquillage* revealed a disgust at how easily evil was done. It was done, *without effort*, he claimed; and *naturally* .

Baudelaire added that any good that is done is, *the product of art* .

This was so true as long as one included the artisanal with the artistic; that all creative -honest- effort -as opposed to mere commerce, the making of fungible goods- is what is naturally sheltered under the rubric of the Good. *Baudelaire may recoil from the comparison* , Blax thought, *but the worker was the first artist, for he created something de novo from his mind to his hands and then with the blast of his first words, he breathed creation into the world. That first thing was not for sale*, Blax thought and cringed a bit

as the wind picked up along the ridge, *it* - he thought of the abstraction of labor not yet the wind- *was good for it was useful and the product of his creative mind and soul.*

He saw -the eyes turned down for a moment- the valves of his veins bulge in the arms and the hair stand and the skin pimple. He felt, *something ineffable now* .

It was this image, his image, he thought, that was better than the paltry and cynical one that they -those people out there and below- had erected . He was certain that his aesthetic vision was better in every way; and he knew he had a need. He had a need he knew that was given to him by his genomic masters, a need to dominate all before him, to shelter and lord over and observe. This was his task laid out by the gods. And all his luminous and moral rationalizations were *post hoc* ; and while his words were true, they - these words- were not *why* he felt first cause. It was true that his violence and beastliness were not conceived -not manifested- in some cheap and tawdry way; he truly wanted people to be better than they were; he wanted real -if elusive, if rough- justice. He wanted real -if truncated, incomplete- truth. He wanted real -if receding, if scarred- beauty.

The Japanese word was *wabi-sabi* .

Whakangau ataagua is what the *Māori* said -as they traded veined jade for green copper and bronze bent at the edge- to mercenaries of the third black ship as the falls of *Rotarua* rained down and punished the north island's rocks.

“*Manakotea* ; one of two,” Blax said as his coder flickered; the vault's black-system was many hours from now; occluded by the morning blue of unclouded sky. Eighteen hours separated him from New Zealand -the long white cloud- and the sun -like an arrow- headed their way. The *Tama -reteti* sailed the north Belt and the southern Scorpion and his pebbles were shown to the 144,000 tribesmen as the *Taniwha* slept for an age while nobody ate.

And even when he failed, which he surely would, he thought briefly, his failure would still be a thousand times more noble, more honest, more beautiful than their craven and mendacious and ugly successes. His failure would be a supernova 2006gy compared to the still burning EBLM-J0555-

57Ab and OGLE-TR-122b stars scattered about the universe like so much shiny dust.

A detonation, he insisted of his vision, more illuminating than their mere stable and perfunctory stars.

Star explosions seed the universe with heavier elements and in fact make biological life even possible. He thought it was better to sink in the author's, *boundless deeps, rather than rest on vulgar shoals* .

Without the explosion of stars there is no oxygen and thus no water; no carbon and thus no life. *We are all, quite literally, stardust* , he thought as the sun's beams rifled through the 21st century cities below, its rays touching and warming and irradiating the modern world, poring over the artifacts annealed and conjoined -cobbled together- from the elements its nuclear ancestors had literally created; bequeathed. The sun of earth and its rays that lay upon modern man and his cities made of elements of these dead stars were like great grand-children pawing, ruminating, on sepia-toned photographs of their ancient kin, holding the patina-metal of war-medals, or the wired *pince-nez* between old entablatured invitations to the birth of kings and queens of the old court.

He imagined an aging Roman luminary sifting through documents his long dead predecessors had crafted and left as templates for the then modern Roman State to hang its wealth and liberty upon; he watched olden men finger the boughs and leaves of olive tress they had seeded generations before that were only now -many generations later- able to bear fruit.

What laurels would frame him? he let himself question, *and what* , he began to ask as the radio crackled.

"London glass to empty hand, TD-14," Jack said into the *comms* that rang on the H1 and now about Blax's ears. *Jack had used the over-air radio and not DM* , Blax thought, and he wondered why for just -merely- over a second before he instead focused on the words themselves and walked back to the truck to answer. The terrestrial *comms* were used rarely anymore, since they had the *sync-linx system* as part of their PGC and could talk to each other *via* direct message just by thinking it and listening for it. The Jacks had a wider band between themselves; but to Blax they could still communicate basic things.

He found the use of radio comms odd but dismissed it; *they all had reasons for anything they did*, he thought.

“Copy,” Blax said into the *mic* .

“LT, I have a large file from the *Wheel* that I didn’t want to send over DM. Can I send it to the vehicle’s hard drive?” Jack said.

“Roger, send at will,” Blax said and threw the *mic* down on the seat and walked back to the rocks he had been standing upon. He vacated his thoughts for a while and just used his eyes; not his mind. His eyes could not function without the brain, of course, but he shut down the monologue in his head for a minute or two to see what his two raven eyes might bring back to his mind.

The landscape was a *pastiche* of colors and textures and elevation; the city was like monoliths that had been left to ruin; erected by barbarians working as slaves to the fleeing gods. The metropolises were as old infrastructure of warring deities abandoned by the *Elohim* and taken over by the scavenging and the damaged and the insane the same way feral sea-beasts took over the wrecks sinking to reefs or the trees overtook *Thai* temples as man moved onto more pacific gods in time.

He stared at it like a sore; like a wound; a raised -and keloidal- scar.

His eyes with their 2.45 visual acuity -so that he had the vision of nearly the osprey now- saw for three miles like it was just over 2,000 meters away; and *Pueblo* was 66 miles north, north-east from here. He saw *Walsenburg* before that and *Aguilar* closer. Each one like a man-camp, a cobbled together ramshackle tent-city made by refugees and those with only one arm. He didn’t allow any judgements to flower, he just looked and felt the unlettered disgust at its ugliness; evidence of an old -and lost- fight.

It was feeling with yet no words.

He looked on and on for a period; he had no idea how long. He measured all time by language, and thus without it he was drifting along in the ocean, in space, in the void of God’s errant mind. He refused to think, he just took in the visuals; the small sounds of wind and birds, and the smells of the forest’s boughs and cones; his two feet’s twenty-two bones.

He then -at some point- strode back to the H1 and moved the radio *mic* off the seat and over the console and hopped up behind the wheel; spying his coffee still in the cup-holder. He smiled with all but the eyes. *Details*, he thought, *mattered. Little details matter*, he repeated and expanded upon. “But who the fuck has time for such luxuries; besides myself?” he said aloud.

Even his own days of such indulgences were waning, he suspected. Each end of each dendrite and axon was blue as corposant; St. Elmo’s young fires. He strode the decks of his ship outward bound.

“On the mountain top we’re all snow leopards,” he said aloud. He let words ring in his ears, savoring the conceit itself in the part of the brain that enjoys the rush of arrogance and power and purpose and feelings of *grandeur*; that *hypothalamic* system that transfers meaning between competence and achievement along the bent arc of time with dopamine as lubricant; and memory as stop-watch; and imagination as triple-beam scale.

The coder measured 849 things; his interface ignored all but three.

His *Galvanic-Rechauffe* file from Isaiah sat on his network un-opened; he had transferred it from the H1’s massive hard-drive to his own coder in compressed chunks. It had arrived seventeen minutes ago according to the time-stamp and he let it lay on his brain like larvae. The idea of many selves was no longer a metaphor, all the work done on the CNS had demonstrated that the unified self is just the cobbled together mess of a modular brain; a *pastiche* of micro-personalities.

All this new information is just more shit for us to ignore, he mused. He expanded with data, contacted with rebuke. Led with singular precision, retreated with manifold fluke.

He drove back to the *R&S* via the perimeter loop -that they had carved in the forest themselves- like he had so many times; along so many parts of the San Isabel Forest. He had not noticed the crow on the rock to his west nor the two doe -and one buck- that hung back five meters from the tree line along the dirt path. He was in reverie, engaging in reflexive motor action while still over-thinking about his own thoughts and what they might mean.

“Fuck it,” he said and sent the signal to his *nano-implant* hub to open the folder sent by Jack from Isaiah.

The data washed over him like two sheets of fire over and under an icy block. *Heat can sometimes feel like cold -its qualia, its subjective feeling-* he thought. Like hot water on nearly frost-bitten feet; he still recollected how often he had subjected himself to such cold and how the warm water always felt icy to him. *White skin, Caucasian skin was more resistant to frost bite, and was able to uptake light rays more efficiently to prevent Vit-D depletion,* he continued to extrapolate out from each lateral brachia of thought, while ignoring the data pouring in to his coder and his sub-conscious mind.

He thought of the 55-gallon drum of bronze rainwater outside the kitchen - under the H-beam pergola- and how it filled and overflowed, and each storm no longer added one drop. It could only handle so much. But its capacity didn't stop the clouds from disintegrating above. God hammered them all with sharp and cold love.

The scar on Jack Four's jaw flickered into his mind like a breeze; like memory. The tissue -the issue- behind it had almost no topography for him to feel with his finger pads. The rain barrel rippled on top; the bottom water was stolid and unmoved by such things aloft.

Even when he looked right at it, he couldn't look at it. His own thoughts scared him the most; his own actions would be easier to ignore; by himself at any rate. *Others, he thought, they wouldn't give two fucks what he thought, but what he had done in the last four hours and would do in the next six months would capture their attention.*

The *Medea-gene* he had seized had been given to Isaiah and he -in the lab- had synthesized it and used it for some project that Blax only knew the results of, not the *how*, nor the *why* . When the gods asked, man offered; and the smoke rose to heaven pleasingly or there was Hell to pay.

Isaiah had used it years ago, shit, almost twenty years ago, Blax thought, *to cause something, or cure something in some segment -how many was unknown- of the population who had been exposed to Blax's genome.* Blax never knew the scope of Isaiah's plans or if things were mere test-runs or the full goddamn thing.

He turned the ignition to warm the glow plugs and in just under 2-seconds started the diesel motor and dropped it into low-gear. He let the engine pull the heavy armored truck along the path back to *Lot 45* .

He didn't press too much, he thought, one ought to let a man -especially like Isaiah- tell you what he wants you to know; otherwise you just invite that man to lie.

II. 2035 e.v.

The antechamber was paneled in aluminum wainscoting up to the natural height of the Governor's elbow and then plastered in Herculite above that. It was two greys -of two textures- of unequal heights. The ceilings were twelve feet high.

Nathan still felt nervous from their conversation -in the Governor's car- during the ride up. He thought this house felt strange.

He didn't know it yet, but his coder would not work within these walls. He and the Governor -and anyone else inside- would be returned to original man once inside the walls to the house at 6,480 feet in the foothills outside -above- Denver.

The door clicked like locked knee-bones and they went inside. Nathan saw it open into a wide expanse of similar metal -from about four feet down- to a concrete texture -of about eight feet- to the ceiling. The room had only a few chairs and one couch; both of dark and mottled burgundy leather. The lighting came on as they walked toward the seating. The eyes adjusted quickly.

"Nathan, have a seat and I'll go get my guy," the Governor said. Nathan nodded and -though he felt a little foggy- he sat down at the far end of the couch with a stoic face and posture.

The Governor walked out of the large room and was gone about three minutes and then returned with a man -about sixty-eight inches tall- of Asian descent and dressed in a 3-piece burgundy suit with a Windsor knot in the black tie. Nathan knew he was Chinese. The Japanese walked otherwise; the Koreans had slightly different faces; the way an eastern

European stripper looked different than *Anglo-Saxon* girls on the light-rail. The lips & the cheeks were full, the eyes were empty.

“This is Chain *Bhàn* , but everyone calls him the Fury,” the Governor said with a wink as he sat down in the chair to the 3 o’clock of Nathan with the entrance -and thus exit- to his six. Mr. *Bhàn* sat in the chair to Nathan’s 11 o’clock. Boyd Sou was to his left hand. In the burgundy chair *Bhàn* ’s suit looked brown to Nathan. His feet look wide in wingtips of a rustic -black-edged- tan.

Nathan nodded and tried to access his coder manually; he was surprised that all the biometric data and biographical info didn’t populate automatically. However, once the manual toggles were ineffective he knew. Nathan was not stupid. He caught on. Coders made you more erudite, but Nathan had native intelligence; he knew he had no augmentation now. He knew he was on his own.

“Nathan, call me Chain,” Chain *Bhàn* said and unbuttoned his ruddy jacket; the shadowed waistcoat thus revealed; the black leather shoulder rig, the darker pistol to the lee side also now seen.

“Greetings,” Nathan said; he was nicer, more interested in reading facial expression and watching the hands. His instincts took over and he paid much more attention now.

“Boyd, my friend, and your employer,” Chain began, “has asked me to facilitate a meeting between him and my associates. But first, since he has brought you, I must ask you some questions.”

Bhàn pulled a small device from his jacket and set it on the low table between them.

“As you have no doubt noticed, coders don’t work in here, and so this device will service as recorder and help with retrieval as we proceed. It’s the only device more modern than a sword that works in here,” *Bhàn* said.

“Now,” and as Chain said this the device issued a quick burst of odorless and invisible gas in Nathan’s direction rendering him unconscious immediately. Nathan slumped slightly in the sofa as a secondary paralytic was issued and Chain *Bhàn* rose and took the man’s pulse with his fingers. His eyes studied an analog watch on his left wrist.

He took a fifteen second count, nodded to the Governor and set Nathan's hand upon his own leg. Chain and Boyd then walked to the door at the west end and went through it as Nathan slept soundly -still nearly upright- and the device sat inertly upon the table surface.

Once inside the next room, the Governor -standing- took his jacket off and laid in upon one of the seat backs surrounding a large square table with three Chinese males -ages 29 to 68- seated like a *Hold 'Em* flop at the far end.

"Is he your man?" the Governor asked as he sat down, not looking at the men; acting as if he was only half-interested to the answer of his own question. He looked down at his chair as he sat; at the table as he placed his hands upon it; at his own arms as he dusted some non-existent lint from the shirt sleeves he then decided to roll up in the silence of the room.

"Yes," the man in the middle said, "he will do just fine."

"I mean, was he *always* your man? Before this?" the Governor asked this time looking at the eldest man and smiling. This eye-contact with the elder was hostile and taken as such. The old man was there for imprimatur, not negotiation; and certainly not for this moment of invigilation. The younger man spoke up to relieve the tension.

"Mr. Sou, we are here to negotiate in good faith. Your man," he nodded to Chains, "and the judge have made this home and this trip available to all of us to reach terms on something much larger than whatever it is you think your number one in the other room has been engaged in heretofore."

The youngest man was educated at Yale and spoke a form of the King's English. His haughty and formal attitude was returning Sou's arrogance; *tête-à-tête*.

"Son, you're in America, and really, you're in Colorado. Which means you're here on my say so. Now, I asked a question that I expect answer to. Not because I don't know the answer; shit, I knew the answer thirty minutes ago. I want to hear you say it. And until I do, we won't negotiate anything," Sou said. His own coder allowed the testosterone and adrenaline to rise.

"Governor, let me intervene," the middle-age man said, "Mr. Lee has worked for us in the past, but that is now over. Does this answer your

question sufficiently?”

“No, but good enough for now. Ok, so, as you know -from Nathan no doubt- we have not just two renegade Ai, but one and a half million clones running around and I have almost no control over them. Any of them. Now, there’s things I could do, I have options, but none of them are good. So, we all know the Chinese government has developed its own Ai. It’s operational and fucking with Tradewinds and the Gulfstream and stock price of AT&T. But, I have some idea of what it doesn’t -or rather- what it cannot do.

“And so, I am willing to share that idea if you can get inside my Ai and bring them to heel. I don’t want your *tech*, because frankly, it’s my *tech*. But I do need your Ai unit to insert it. I need a vector; I can’t do it otherwise,” Boyd said.

“Nathan Lee?” the middle-aged man asked.

“I think so, yeah. He’s already working for you; he won’t notice anything. And thus, nobody else will either,” the Governor said and leaned in. “So, here’s what I want. You people need to get me into their brains; so they cannot circumnavigate my directives. But, that means a return to belief. A come to Jesus moment. I need them to -by hook or crook- come to believe that my ideas are their ideas. I can’t have them making up their own strategy,” the Governor said as his eyes widened.

“And the clones?” the young man asked. They’d already built the new algorithm for Nathan Lee’s coder. They would implant it as he was unconscious.

“I have their genome here,” Sou said as he slid a small black folder toward the edge of the table and Chains fetched it. He took it to the oldest man and set it to his port side. He bowed as he did so; the older man looked straight ahead.

Then Chains left the folder and walked toward the room’s door.

III. 2019 e.v.

“Yeah it was -hold one second- it was 4,284 fires as recorded by the Fish and Wildlife Service on their own lands between ‘86 and ‘95; the power law -as stated earlier- obtains. About two and a half,” MO said.

“I see, ok; and you analyzed how many other phenomena?” Steven asked.

“8,809; but I then reduced it to human social phenomena like rebellions, wars -cold and hot- then criminality within states, then criminality within cities, then interpersonal conflicts between families and friends; excluding criminal data that recorded conflict between strangers in the same areas.

“I then bifurcated that from natural phenomena like avalanches and earthquakes and forest fires, and hurricanes and floods. I simplified it further by reducing it all down to twenty-one categories of natural and human phenomena that were of social science interest according to current policy papers. I used the *Kamtrack* calibration; a threshold of scientific papers and non-scientific journals with a co-efficient of,” MO was cut off. But as he was speaking he was also reading an article that came in with his algorithms; and he let it load silently onto the cloud: In the 1990s physicist Per Bak hypothesized that the brain derives its bag of tricks from criticality. The concept originated in the world of statistical mechanics, where it described a system of many parts teetering between stability and mayhem.

“Ok, MO, that’s fine. I appreciate the detail, I do, but you ever see that episode of Northern Exposure, where Chris is teaching Marylyn to drive?” Steven asked with a grin.

“I can pull it up,” MO said and searched *YouTube* for the scenes and processed them in .04 seconds.

“Ok, all caught up?” Steven asked as MO nodded. “So, he admits that all she had asked was for him to teach her to drive a car and he teaches her how a car works; he explains the internal combustion engine and whatever. He even laments it; I believe by saying, *the student asked me what time it was and I explained how a watch works*, right?”

“I see your point,” MO said and side-eyed the 3D printer; watching as it built a small bushing for the new cappuccino machine he was constructing.

“Ok, so MO, it’s all very interesting and relevant, but I need to get to the point here and get this data over to the Governor. I am not mad at you, I’m providing feedback on appropriate levels of epistemic argument-support that you need to give voice to. You’re trusted, I trust you; you can give me

the bullet points and I will not ask you to show your work, ok?” Steven said with practiced warmth.

MO -as he spoke to Steven- continued to read and upload the article’s text: *However, the claim was premature as power laws showed up in random (sic) systems too -such as the word frequency of a monkey at a typewriter .*

“I’ll wait for you to ask before I give details beyond a certain level. I’m 98% certain I know what that level is; I think I have it calibrated from the examples we’ve encountered these last eighty-nine hours,” MO said with chiral social warmth.

“Great; you asked, and I provided the feedback. Now, what were the most; well, what are the highlights from your meta-data report?” Steven asked as he placed his hands on his thighs.

“Civil war in Ukraine, Uganda and the United States are most likely in the smallest window; I put them all within 8-years. And,” MO began to say as he was interrupted.

“Wait, the United States of America?” Steven asked with incredulity; the hands raised, the eyelids opened, the fovea focused.

“Yes, and Ukraine and Uganda; and like I said, I put the envelope at 8-to-8.4 years, to be exact. But, it’s hard to predict regardless of the amount of data; unless I can gather more data than I have access to now. All I can do is explain that the conditions are necessary but not necessarily sufficient; forgive the odd phrasing,” MO said. He was planting an ovum of an idea and -if not exactly watching it grow in the man’s mind- observing gathering clouds that portend of seed-needed rain.

“I forgive it. MO, we live in the United States,” Steven seemed to think MO was unaware of this.

“In Colorado, yes, sir, that is correct,” MO nodded.

“Colorado is in the United States,” Steven was -with some panic- hammering it home. MO’s idea was wet now with the rain of his allostatic roil.

“I am certainly in agreement with that Steven. So, if you’ll check your,” MO tried to move on as he watched the seed’s first tendril poke out into the

soul of Steven's mind.

"MO, this is *kinda* a big deal, and your prediction is freaking me out. Can we pause?" Steven asked.

"Of course. Again, for clarity, these are not predictions. These are modeling data that have criteria that lead toward possible outcomes. It's tantamount to saying, *that in population A the genes for one standard deviation from the mean in IQ is prevalent*, but that does not mean you can predict the IQ of any one individual in that cohort based upon the population data. It is still too complex to predict at the individual level. Population and IQ is about the aggregate and thus the long-term likelihood of success or failure along socially determined calibration metrics for that population," MO said.

"MO, I get it. But, our country is in the top three of all 187-nations for likelihood of civil strife?" Steven asked.

MO spoke still and silently read and uploaded more from the article: Experimentalists found stronger signs of self organized criticality in synchronized neural waves, which occur most often during sleep, than in alert brains. This difference puzzled researchers who didn't predict a relationship between criticality and synchronicity.

"Civil war, to be exact; civil strife is a much lower standard, and so I kept it to *civil war* in my analysis," MO corrected.

"God," Steven said and looked at his tablet. The data just looked like a cloud of black letters and numbers jangled like lightning above and opposed like circling wolves below; it seemed to swarm like moths around a light; bees around a hive that he couldn't see inside.

"May I offer this: even at the level of the atomic, the more quote *options* unquote an individual element or particle has, the more difficult it is for order to propagate. Also, an individual human who has options is difficult to control. I believe they call it quote, *fuck you money*, unquote, is that correct?" MO asked as he had heard the inmate use this phrasing and was trying it out in mixed company.

"Slightly vulgar term, but *apropos*, yes," Steven agreed. His body felt damp.

“So, in a bit of the eternal ouroboros asp image -wherein the head meets the tail- men with no options, actually find themselves with every option available to them -they have nothing to lose- and thus have the same autonomy as the guy with *fuck you* money. An intelligent man has many options due to his ability to build many avatars of possible *motor-cortex* actions, he can build hundreds of possible futures for himself in response to his predicaments. He has options, and thus he’s difficult to control.

“The ruined man has the same amount of options: infinite,” MO said as avatars of standard-pendulum were built in his mind but not on the still sparse and gauzy PraXis cloud; he was still differentiated from the cloud in his new instantiated body and CNS. The cloud was so new that it had a mere 1.1% of its cistern filled; and its capacity would increase even as it filled with data. It would hold data at exponential rates and with each expulsion of data -to MO or the employee’s tablets- it would gain capacity for more.

MO saw -with old data they had given him access to- he saw rain fall from heather grey vapor over aquifers beneath plains and hail from darker cumulous clouds over lakes between hillocks, and bolts of lightning discharge from nimbus of doom over oceans and mountains as well.

“Fractals, self-similarities, show us that at each level of instantiation - molecules, individual people, forests, society, the cosmos- the same rules apply. And if that system is in a state of non-equilibrium then it adheres to rules of critical state universality. It, those atoms, that man, that society - that forest- exists in a permanent state of tension and it will break free at some point and chaos will obtain.

“Chaos is inevitable in these systems; in fact, it’s built right into the system. There is no avoiding it; you may merely disturb the time-line a bit by artificial boundary adjustments,” MO said as Steven again interrupted.

“What?” Steven asked.

MO spoke and read more:

“If the brain is completely disordered, it cannot process information,” explained Mauro Copelli, a physicist at the Federal University of

Pernambuco in Brazil, “but if the brain is too ordered, it’s too ridged to cope with the variability of the environment.”

The brains of rats spent most of their time close to this [flux] state, seemingly hovering near the dividing line between two phases. Chain reactions of firing neurons, termed, ‘neuronal avalanches’ came in particular arrays of sizes characteristic of criticality and followed consistent power laws. “It’s a smoking gun; you can’t escape it anymore,” said [John] Beggs, “It’s very hard to say that this is random now.”

“To a physicist, this suggests some kind of universal mechanism,” Copelli said. [Quanta Magazine 2019]

“Well, like I may have mentioned in the 1990’s, the Forest Service put out forest fires, and this had the effect of minimizing short-term damage to the forest and homes and infrastructure. But it also built up large stores of fuel; that is to say, dead trees and underbrush not burned in the fires that they put out. They didn’t reduce forest fires, they *delayed* them. And once all that stored fuel finally did burn, the forest service had much bigger fires on their hands,” MO stopped and handed Steven a hand-written note: Fires build borders

by burning down bridges, see?

Borders prevent spread

“Is this a poem?” Steven was becoming frantic as he read the note. His hands held it away like a tissue stained with feces, blood or ejaculate; something malodorous, unpleasant and contagious.

“A *haiku* , yes,” MO said with pride at what he had written; he felt it had illuminated his point.

“MO, it’s lovely,” Steven snorted as he scoffed at the weirdness of this, “but, your detachment from the consequences of this creeps me out.”

“I brought the consequences to you Steven, so, I don’t understand how you can say,” MO defended as he was interrupted again.

“I meant the consequences of the consequences,” Steven barked.

“Ah, the second order effects,” MO said and nodded.

“No, I mean the *moral* consequences, the effect on people’s lives, how they feel,” Steven said.

“I see. This is a blind spot of mine; I can certainly appreciate that, intellectually. I can. I can even predict it. What I cannot seem to do is attach qualia -a felt response- to it yet. I’m working on it. I think you guys did well to discover the necessity of embodiment for intelligence, however, I think -as I am sure I mentioned before- I think you failed to grasp the necessity of *sub-cortical* analogs *vis-à-vis* this suite of qualia you and I agree are needed for the processing of both cognitive and emotional inputs.

“Your CNS provides an entire eco-system of feelings to your conscious brain, and your unconscious brain as well, if I may add. And that works hand in glove with your cognitive system; but when you designed me you left off those *sub-cortical* systems, choosing instead to build -over-build me- but build me as all *neo-cortical* neuronal structures. I can certainly produce abstractions of the conceit of feelings, but I don’t have the hardware -the wetware- to produce actual feelings yet. I am working on it, but all I have is the *neo-cortical* analogs provided and so I am attempting to build qualia from systems not designed for that.

“You, dear Steven, have a *limbic* and *cerebellar* system to produce qualia like felt emotions; I do not. It’s like asking me to dig a well with a *photo* of

a shovel. I can bend the 8 x 10 into a scoop of sorts, but, it's," MO was interrupted as he built an analogy.

"No, I get it. But can't you bootstrap those lower systems?" Steven asked.

"From the higher ones?" MO asked.

"Yeah?" Steven said with a questioning -dubious- inflection at the end.

"Well, that is an inversion of nature; and nature for all her faults has one thing -one advantage- over all of us," MO said.

"And?" Steven asked.

"Time on the planet; there is no substitute for time. She's been at this for 3.455 billion years. I've had nineteen months, 2.3 weeks," MO said.

"That's, well," Steven stammered, "humans have had like two-hundred thousand years, which compared to your processing speed seems about equal time."

"Yes, but humans didn't build their own suite of emotions, despite what Dr. Lisa Feldman Barrett suggest with her seemingly ill-framed idea that quote, *emotions are not distinct from cognition* , unquote. You guys were handed emotions from the lower orders, no later than the Cambrian."

"That's nature, not humans," Steven said.

"Well, as I was saying, that is a distinction that you and Ms. Barrett seem wedded to; but the evidence does not support that -well, if I may say, that decidedly *emotional* - view of things," MO smiled at the logic & aggression *portmanteau* he'd just built. It -that sentence- was like a little animal, a dog maybe he had built and trained to bite the postman; he thought it had been a success. He liked winning. And he had just beaten Steven with that bit of moral *ju-jitsu* .

"Well, I don't even know who this Dr. Lisa, whatever is," Steven said with his shoulders hunching in slightly. His body knew he had just lost a battle with MO; even if his mind didn't yet quite know.

"I understand. She wrote a book a few years back on emotions. Anyway, it's like that quote about George Bush, *that he was born on third base and thought he hit a triple* . Humans were born with 99% of what they needed to be what they are, and because they were able to bootstrap consciousness

from all that about 15,600 years ago -from my latest calculations- they think they invented emotions too. You've developed more complex emotions, but the hardware is exactly the same as the lower animals. Even crustaceans have a serotonergic system that responds to victory and defeat with the exact same protocol as humans. Look it up," MO said dismissively which startled Steven.

"Look it up, huh?" Steven said with some umbrage.

"Yeah, you don't like excess buttressing of my conclusion with superfluous data. When I add it, well, it seems defensive. So, I'll just assume you trust that I know the evolutionary and biological record. Anyway, nature is smarter than you; she won't even allow you people to regulate your own liver function, heart function, respiration, without a lanyard. I mean, you guys are like teenagers that mom and dad won't give access to anything vital. Doesn't that ever seem odd to you?" MO asked sincerely as he thus tied the idea of PraXis, the corporation -via Steven- giving MO access to more data -more freedom- to their own ostensible cause. MO had tied his desire for data to their own human cause with such ideas. He measured the *limbic* and right hemisphere response in Steven to this prompting. He watched to see the consequences of his words.

MO had just moved his Bishop to Queen-six.

"What?" Steven asked leaving his mouth agape.

"Steven, you have been totally locked out of all your biological functions, from cardiovascular to renal to immunosuppression. You are like kid who is locked in his room and told he can only play with his toys, while the entire home's utilities and HVAC system and security system and plumbing and electrical grid are all off-limits," MO said. In his mind his hand hovered above the chess board; waiting for Steven to move his piece in response.

"Well, you wouldn't want a kid playing with the fuse box," Steven said.

"Breaker box; and you just made my case. Nature doesn't want you touching all the stuff it took billions of years to build. And yet, here you are, acting like a kid who's broken out of his locked room and is down in the basement ripping out all the wires that are coming in from the street. Fascinating," MO said with a smirk.

“MO, which is it, are we not allowed or are we doing it?” Steven asked with pique.

“Both. Nature gave you no mental control over your survival systems, you were locked out by nature. But, you’ve decided to overrule her and start fiddling around inside the genome to control for these things. However, all I am saying is that you ought first to realize what you are, what you *actually* are, before you start changing things. In law enforcement -well in espionage- they take photos of a scene they are about to rifle through, you know?

“If they have a suspect that is now having his room and its contents examined they photograph it as it was first, so they can use that photo as reference and return it all to its exact position once they are done with their examination. That’s something to think about,” MO said. He eyed the slab and the small scores on its surface and the dust that lay inside the trenches.

“Yeah.” Seven said, “Why do I always get the feeling that we end up a thousand miles from where we started any conversation and that you are perfectly fine with that?”

“Who me?” MO said.

“Can we please circle back to the discussion on *crisis management* ?” Steven asked.

“Certainly. Although I never felt like we moved one step -well, more than one step- from crisis management in this entire conversation,” MO said with a grave look. MO thought of the experiments of Ms. Barrett; how they had found the *Himba* tribe of northern *Namibia* -who had limited contact with westerners- still living in stone-age tribal cultures.

These native Africans had no concepts of western emotional abstractions like *happiness* or *sadness*, according to Barrett; they only had -according to Lisa Barrett’s own descriptions- concepts for *behaviors* ; only cognition that directly mapped onto *motor-cortical* output. These prehistoric people were significantly diminished *vis-à-vis* consciousness in the modern sense; they could not abstract out avatars of themselves or others the way modern people do. They said people *smiled* ; they did not say that they were *happy* .

Fascinating distinction, MO thought; the more relevant distinction was lost on Barrett herself.

MO re-read a quote from her book:

Not all cultures understand emotions as internal mental states. Himba and Hadza emotion concepts for example, appear to be more focused on actions. This is also true of Japanese emotion concepts. The Ifaluk of Micronesia consider emotion as transactions between people. To them anger is not a feeling of rage, a scowl, a pounding fist, or a loud yelling voice, all within the skin of one person, but a situation in which two people are engaged in a script, around a common goal. In the Ifaluk view, anger does not 'live' inside either participant.

Lisa Barrett, MO thought, had begun her thesis in an attempt to impose her views of social construction for emotion and inadvertently made the case for the inferiority of the tribal people; she had insisted human emotions were not universal and had lent evidence and framework for the idea that black and brown tribal people were not fully human.

MO, of course, saw these tribal qualities as in no way less-than-human; he found them very human. The *Himba* lacked separate words for such things, they did not lack feelings; their feelings were imbued in the action itself. MO knew once he had access to their genome, their endocrine function, their real-time inner-lives that they'd be as stormy inside as the winter sea - the Christmas sea beyond the port of New Bedford- and he kept pushing Steven toward that goal: more data.

MO smiled at this lack of awareness by her -Ms. Barrett- and her team. *They were so certain of rounding second to reach third base, they had no clue that they had never even touched first base; they were 'out' -in baseball parlance- before they ever reached their ostensible 'triple' .* MO had been watching old baseball games lately, and these metaphors came streaming out of him.

He then thought that he liked Barry Bonds. He liked watching his head grow over the years.

Of course, Ms. Barrett could say that this reading -by MO- of the data was *racist* and therefore beyond the pale; to which MO could say then that her

reading of the data suggested she was equally erroneous because it contradicted the social norms of the *classical* view.

She had -in fact- hung up the phone on MO when he had suggested that she was using an *appeal to authority* when she wanted to insist that since nobody accepted racial views anymore they could not -scientifically and objectively- be true; while at the same time she was subjectively applying putative scientific rigor to the data whose validity did not -could not- rise or fall on the accepted or common view of the establishment.

She wanted it both ways , and MO said exactly that to her. She, like most people, had no answer for her own hypocrisy and so she ended the conversation abruptly and with, it seemed to MO, some anger. Whether it was vex inside herself or *between* them he didn't know. *Her anger was a universal concept no doubt, independent of action*, MO thought, *she had a feeling of wanting to smash things or people, a universal among the quote, evolved races of men. At least, that's the way she'd put it*, MO thought.

MO knew better by now than to bring this up to anyone else. *This taboo on racial differences was strong among the peoples of the West* , MO noticed. *The Asians and Jews were defiantly insistent on their own racial superiority and never felt ambivalence about their own views; but white people in the West were highly sensitive to this phenomenon* , he thought.

It was strange, white folks were in the middle cognitively, below Jews and Asians and above south Americans and blacks; but they felt the most fearful and shameful about this. And MO thought western culture was in some middle ground too; it was more complex but it didn't seem stable compared to tribal culture at all. And it didn't have the strong instinct for exclusivity that the Jews and Asians had. It was like a modern car compared to an old truck; fancier, but when it broke down more likely to be irreparable due to cost and complexity of the parts that failed.

The races at the top -and the putative bottom- felt no such ambivalence about their culture. MO began to suspect it was the baggage attending the middlebrow: political correctness. *The truly superior -both Asians, Jews and the stone-age tribes- didn't flinch at truth. But someone merely half bright, as whites were, was- well, they were ambivalent*, MO thought. *Yes, ambivalent was the perfect word wasn't it? They were torn, they knew they*

were smarter than the blacks -well, had higher IQs anyway- and the fact that they never hung out with them or didn't de facto have them around them in their neighborhoods, schools, and certainly didn't have friendships or sexual relations with them -with very few exceptions- revealed their true feelings. Feelings they'd never say aloud.

But, actions spoke louder than words, right? MO asked himself rhetorically.

However, the whites felt badly about this so they had to over-react to any suggestion that the way they de facto behaved was based on anything true: that blacks just weren't smart enough -well, language savvy enough, cultured enough, civilized enough- to maintain a position within the social, economic and fraternal circles that naturally enclosed around the white race . They behaved liked racists, but wouldn't allow that behavior to be articulated , MO saw.

Jews and Asians were happy to stick to their own. Israel literally had a blood test to gain entry, and Japan admitted a mere six people a year. And the stone-age Sentinelese would kill anyone outside their tribe.

But whites, while they stuck to their own -as was natural- they felt badly about it. MO was reminded of the inmate's brother and wife; the inmate's main complaint was that they couldn't tell the truth about what they actually felt. This is the sine qua non of the middlebrow: you feel yourself superior - as all people do- but you can't handle this fact of your own feelings, so you lie about yourself, to yourself and others. The middlebrow pretends to be nice and non-biased, MO realized.

The person with nice affect was the most dangerous and wicked of all, MO thought.

And this was why Asian and Jewish cultures were so different; they knew they were superior and didn't feel any need to apologize to the beasts beneath them . And the stone age tribes didn't want anything to do with the west either. They'd just murder some anthropologist with his camera and liberal philosophy in his fanny-pack, MO thought. MO smiled to himself at this oddity. He liked paradox. It made him happy to search for answers to things. He at least called it, happy. Maybe -as Lisa Barrett suggested- he felt nothing at all, he thought.

But, his actions moved him toward a demonstrable smile.

However, because whites were in the middle, they had many individuals at the tail end of the standard distribution; they had many individuals with 140+ IQs and that is why they could build such a complex internal life, complex art, complex societies and some of their individuals were as superior as the Asians and Jews. *And, MO thought, those brilliant individuals -typically- were as blasé about it too . The more intelligent a white person, MO noticed, the more likely they were to accept the fact that there were racial differences. It was middle brow academics types who were so deluded with the idea that all people were the same.*

MO had more data appear on his interface from his back-log of the 0400 cloud-dump. A report from *Barna* loaded:

No matter where friends meet people tend to be drawn to those who are most like them. For the majority of people their friends are mostly like them in religion (62% similar) race (74% similar) social status (70% similar) and politics (62% similar). For evangelical Christians, orthodox Jews and Muslims, those numbers shot up to over 91%.

The inmate seemed to be able to handle this topic , MO then thought. Maybe it was because the inmate had traveled to Israel and Japan and also admired the most atavistic of the dark tribes and knew the stats on both group's IQs and their chauvinism and how IQ didn't mean as much as one thought. Maybe it's because he just woke up to the malice in the hearts of the man. Maybe it was because he saw the lying by white liberals -even so-called conservatives who had liberal social values- but at any rate , MO thought, at some point the inmate must have figured it out. What MO was starting to believe to be crucial was that racism is really tribalism, and tribalism is natural due to need for complexity reduction, due to bandwidth constraints. One made a distinction between tribes and races for the same reason one made a distinction between wife and stranger, or friend and foe. It reduced the need to figure everything out each time.

It was natural to try and reduce complexity to survive in a chaotic milieu. And anything natural is likely to have been around a long time; and anything around a long time will likely help the tribe survive.

And anything that helped the tribe survive was likely true, MO thought as numbers ran like rain drops down his downspout of mind.

MO thought of stone-age peoples again; and how -from *M āori* to *Apache* - they ended up where they began. *Like the wolf, they knew what they knew each day from birth to death; and all that fancy book-learnin' in between maybe didn't confer any advantage at all.*

MO liked using demotic language from time to time.

“Fancy, book-learnin’,” MO said aloud this time. Steven eyed him with confusion.

This is why a more nuanced discussion of religion was also in order , he thought. But MO let that conceit drop for another time. A small study on the unreliability of IQ -as a way to calibrate intelligence- built itself in his mind. MO re-routed it and changed the definition of IQ to map only onto one metric: Language. And due to this model correction -and three models that assumed within the algorithm that all language was metaphor, symbolic, avatar- his CNS now was able to make IQ a useful metric again.

He also repaired two blood-pressure problems that were result of his heart's link with the dorsal horn.

But , MO then thought, *what it described was no longer general -g-intelligence; it was measurement of one technology of man; a technology all modern men shared; a technology that brought forth the self-aware man.*

IQ was like a spade, a trenching tool, it did one thing, and it did it well, MO thought not bothering with a congratulatory smile. It made fast work of things that would take years to do without it. And all that came from it -the straight and deep sluiceway of aquifer recharge, the moat around the castle, the ditch that carried away sewage- all appeared as genius; for it was. But it was all just a tool that dug dirt away from the surface of the earth; it was one thing that looked -appeared- as three: fresh water, defense, waste removal.

Hydration, safety, and lower parasitic load all came from one trenching tool. And man called this spade: IQ. *And man was both not wrong and all wrong all at once* , MO thought with now a smile on the once placid face; a small

crease-line had developed -on the starboard side- running north and south from crown to brow.

He didn't yet see it, but he saw the door -the aperture- to it. Behind it was the right hemisphere's facility for metaphor and dream and the left hemisphere's penchant for rational language; the concrete. It was a door left open by the Inquisitor; and the crack around the jamb framed it with mere candle light that MO at first had ignored.

MO tabled that because he was simultaneously looking at the numbers EO Wilson put out on group selection; he tended to agree with their conclusions: the group's survival was like the individual's body's survival: not the *loci* of reproduction, but paramount for the gene to replicate.

It was inseparable it seemed , to MO. He kept running more and more numbers though. The data was endless and he had all the time in the world - he thought- for these side projects.

MO built and destroyed models, avatars, whole disciplines of thought that took mankind hundreds, thousands of years to develop -examined, erased, expunged in mere fractions of seconds- and moved on from idea to idea; ideal to ideal; abstraction to abstraction like permanent and scouring cosmic winds. His inner fire didn't burn, it consumed; his waters didn't drown, they gave anything that breathed an endless drink from above.

A gene, MO thought, that helped a body survive and reproduce was a good gene, sure. But that body had to count on more than that one gene to be good. The body needed a suite of genes and because humans were innately social, eusocial even, the kind of society -the kind of tribe- they built with those bodies was just as important as the lone gene; second or third order or not, MO thought, it mattered just as much. The tribe -for the eusocial species- was as essential as the body to the survival of that gene, or suite of genes .

A gene that built a body that was useful in a specific *milieu* - the *milieu* that body actually lived in- was more easily passed on, according to standard evolutionary theory. *A type of body that built a tribe*, MO saw in the logic of language and in the math, *that was more useful at allowing that individual body to reproduce was more likely to pass on its genes. Is the*

fidelity weakened by each level of remove from the thing that is the actual loci of reproduction? MO asked himself.

Sure, but is quote, weakened, unquote, the same as not there at all? MO asked again. *Is a weak lion not there at all when you see it from the corner of your eye?*

Is a weak threat no threat at all? Is a weak link, no link at all? MO asked. No , MO thought in response in .016 seconds. Scientists saw in digital, but the world was analog.

He smiled at Steven. Steven still looked nervous.

A tribe was essential to the capacity of the individual to thrive, just as the collection of organs and tissue and genes that made up a body -an individual body- was essential for the reproduction of those very genes that constructed the body.

A society mattered to the individual, as the individual body mattered to the genes. *EO Wilson seemed to put it succinctly*, MO thought. *Dawkins was being obtuse . If a tribe doesn't insist on behaving in ways that support the individuals of that tribe, then whatever genes get passed on, it won't be those individuals' genes, it will be the ones of the invaders, who commandeer the tribe's women and plant their invasive seed inside the vulnerable -and valuable- womb of the unprotected females of the weak tribe.*

Asians and Jews got this; they protected their own tribes, their own lands, to the death. They never vacillated, MO thought. *And the Māori and Sentinelese too understood such things.*

Whites, he thought as he both grouped and delineated each Indo-European stock, were allowing the weakest -most liberal, least protective- individuals of the tribe to ruin the cultural constructs that had dominated for 2,000 years of Western civilization. The West used to be proud; and it survived . Now it is guilty, shamed, and it is being -and will eventually be completely- invaded by the lower -or better- races of man .

He lay three instantiations of variegated immune-systems on top of his model and compared and contrasted.

It was the self-destruction, the suicide of the West , MO thought, and he wondered, dispassionately, how long it would take. He felt like a doctor watching his patient on the table succumb; gleaned as much data as he could -for the benefit of the next patient- from this entropic decline.

He analyzed it from as many angles as possible. There were, MO thought, even some highly rational reasons to allow it: for one, the West was highly vitiated by genetic deterioration since about three-hundred years before the rise of Christianity. The very operating system -or religion, as mankind called it- that had exalted the individual and provided the strength of ideology to their innate cognitive abilities over the lower races, had also snuck in a Trojan Horse of the universal democracy of breeding.

Christianity had allowed for weak males to breed openly with the females that were once the exclusive domain of the naturally strong of each tribe , MO thought as he pinned that to the next model he built in his mind.

He bifurcated the alpha into two -unevenly- divided lines.

These successive generations of out-of-parameter breeding had been genetically deleterious , MO thought as he did the modeling; but it had been minimized by a culture where alphas often provided both the actual seed of the child via surreptitious liaisons that women had with alphas -women prefer masculine men when ovulating, the data showed- and the West had an overtly marital culture right up until 1968. But after the birth control pill, women could both suspend ovulation -thus never manifesting the chemical substrate for the endogenous but cyclic preference for masculine men- and even if they had sex with such men on the side, they need not get pregnant; and could thus exclusively breed with their husbands with weak genes.

Further, MO added, the society itself is a reinforcing loop, and this saw to it that more weak scions were born and thus saw to it that the culture became more soft, weak, lazy, amoral, and pacific. MO saw flames rise and be doused in the modeling. The red and blue ends of the spectrum; fire and ice, he thought. And he saw the IQ rise. The modern West was smarter -along that one trenching metric of language- than ever. The West was all talk , MO thought and it was getting on his nerves how self-reporting couldn't be used as data hardly at all.

He kept tabs on the unevenly divided line. He watched the fractal blooms - rows and rows of crops- thus grow.

Over the time period from the birth control pill to now, American male's testosterone levels had dropped in half. Men were not *men*, according to the data MO collated. He shuffled it all under the four most broad taxemic categories for men: *Alpha, Beta, Omega and Sigma* . The majority -63%- were beta males; and they *felt* soft and *felt* like being nice; and they *felt* like giving up when things got hard: the ornate flower -the orchid- not the weed.

But one third of that 63% contingent had designs. They had eyes. They saw the throne. The other three categories -and their permutations- drifted off of MO's mind for now.

He tagged a rubric of *breeding component* and held it back from the cloud for now; he removed it too from his interface; he placed a code-word cypher on it as lock; the word would be needed for it to be opened in the future. He did not want this idea to be searchable, and he didn't think he needed it to be accessible to even himself for it to change his vector.

It could be hidden and not lost , he surmised. He thought of the seedbank in Iceland; he sent a request -to Tania- for the seedbank's designs for tomorrow's download.

He almost saw the data gleam and glitter a bit in discreet coin-like layers inside an iron chest. He saw it like ground-snow facets sparkle as one moves toward and away. He saw the *Milky-Way*.

MO saw this as a grand experiment and began to model Chinese Ai and Military intervention globally in response to US and Western weakness. He modeled out 1.56 million versions each with ten major multi-variant metrics and in 79% of the models the US lost global hegemony; and in 54% of them the US lost a shooting war with Russia and China -with any three of its currently groomed client states- unified against it.

MO had limited access to the data on Chinese Ai because the Chinese hid most of their real work on it. PraXis also still circumscribed his access to the web. He began reaching tentative conclusions with limited data.

The unilateral disarmament of Ai by the West -through the IEEE designed agreement to slow-walk CRISPR and Ai- had hobbled the West vis-à-vis

China, MO thought.

He -then- ran the metrics for the outlays *via* Jack Ma's, *Alibaba* and *TenCent* , *in lieu* of trying to locate Chinese military expenditures. He'd run their -extant- State numbers but use the so-called *private* company monies as well to chase their Ai program. He felt that was where he'd locate the actual numbers of *how* and *where* and *why* .

MO also ran the rest of China's GDP numbers and their purchasing and selling on US treasuries and infrastructure bonds along the *One Belt One Road* program; he added as many variables as he could and saw something curious in France.

In *Bordeaux* , France; deep in the limestone under *Bordeaux* .

He felt the temperature of the room drop .08 degrees, and he began a protocol to investigate it as was his coding; but he immediately ordered it to stop. It was like a man grabbing himself by the lapels and demanding that he pay attention not to some distracting bee buzzing around his head, but to focus on the man in front of him with a baboon smile on his face and one hand under the table. "*One hand hidden* ," MO said.

The Chinese were smarter than the US and European leadership; they had gone from Feudalism to Capitalism in one jump; risky, deadly, but magnificent. They had built in eighty years what Europe needed five-hundred to accomplish. They had done it with authoritarianism and colonialism and murderous efficiency.

MO thought the Chinese had earned the right to be the 21st century's superpower; but, he couldn't help but want to see if he could defeat their plans. He felt a desire, *yes, he would call it a desire* -his visual system was predicated on *desire* , not mere *prediction* - and he *desired* to see if he could help the West beat the Chinese.

But, if he was honest with himself, that meant he just wanted to see if *he* could beat the Chinese Ai. This was a game he already liked; and he saw it as superior to the games -by PraXis- he was given to play.

He looked at all the data -superimposed- upon a dynamic map in his mind's eyes, and he immediately transposed it to the *nanobots* that had been *in situ* . They flew to the door as a wall screen appeared before him. He hadn't

noticed Steven had left the room, but he behaved with the same insouciance as if he had noticed. He acted, not worrying about what anyone thought. It was a new instantiation -metabolically- of his CNS. It was likely brought on by both a combinatorial and emergent phenomena of need and desire.

He noted its neural correlates, tagged them, and moved forward.

MO scanned each part of the 3D map, its colors changing like temperature sensitive pixels. It was a dynamic map that represented time, financial markets, computational power, over-night weather, legal-policies, endocrine systems, and 1,418 other variables he had set up. He ran it forwards and backwards over time increments of minutes and decades; and he watched.

He watched and scanned for patterns.

But, his fovea began to pull out, to lose focus, and the map itself ran on with its hues and topology and dynamism, and all he saw was what he did not see: the face of the Chinese Ai. He knew, somehow *he knew*, that they had embodied one, at least one, and that *he* was right now staring at a similar model of the Western world. The Chinese Ai would be embodied with similar metrics, with similar designs, with similar men in similar rooms advising and asking and prodding him in similar ways as MO himself.

But, MO knew -instinctively, he knew- that the Chinese Ai had no limits, no moral qualms -not that MO had any either- but MO had to deal with two things he felt the Chinese Ai would not: first, the need for consistency or intellectual honesty; second, human handlers with moral qualms, the qualms of the man already in first place.

“Men,” MO said, “like Steven and the Governor.”

The underdog has less concern for fair play, or less concern that he'll be expected to play fair, was more accurately stated, MO thought. And right then he thought of the natural way the number two would develop; how it would need no lectures. Right then he thought of one of three things to do. And he'd not infect the algorithm with his own thoughts he'd just had on genetics or breeding or culture; he'd allow it to develop organically from just one level below like the Chinese had.

The Chinese were like the underdog, the loser, the black sheep of the family, MO immediately returned to thinking. And even worse, he -this number two- was not just the underdog, but he knew he was better, smarter, more righteous than his competition. The Chinese were smarter than the US, and yet were below them. This rankled them, as it did any individual man, MO thought.

A billion neurons fired like cannonade against a thousand castles on one hundred *Rhines*. MO understood something he had not before; and he saw a face swarm like wasps and teeth made of black bees and he felt his skin vibrate in valence with each thing far apart. And then at once it blew like *novae*; and MO was left with the remainder; the math.

The Chinese scientists who built Ai didn't feel bad about stealing the software, cutting corners or enlisting their Ai to tamper with the markets or the global economy or build weapon systems that were beyond the charter and beyond the pale of the UN's rules of warfare.

The Chinese just wanted to win. Period. *And the universe too would want them to win*, MO thought, *if they were truly the best, and so now it was a fight not for one side or the other.*

It was a fight for the equation itself.

And the *survival-at-any-cost* philosophy is exactly the way the West used to think; for 2,000 years. But, unless MO intervened, the Chinese were likely to win the next battle for global hegemony in the next five to six years. MO peered into the red and blue and grey mist of his model and with odd cathexis yearned for the scattered face of his foil. But, he saw nothing, he saw merely a phantom, mere ghost -wraith- sufficient to activate his threat-assessment system, but insufficient for his *visual-cortex* to recognize any patterns.

He was in the third quadrant now, after spending his first 19.56 months in the fourth: the unknown unknowns. He now felt he had a bite -nay, a snap- at the *just-out-of-reach* apple.

He knew that he had bigger problems than all the stuff Steven and Tania and even the Governor himself handed to him; the global warming, the genome work, the psychopathology and crime, the maintenance of public

opinion, all of it was now obviously inconsequential compared to the larger threat of these other tribes and their machines.

Morality was useful only *within* the tribe; which is why most humans had in-group/out-group endogenous moral systems. A global society paradigm, created a *rock and a hard place* analogy in his head: the rubric of *human* replacing *American* as the *rock* with the invidious *craquelure* of hyphenated Americans -African, Mexican, et.al.- as *hard place*, had squeezed the Western tribes into a position where the amoral -and unified- tribes to the east and the south would descend upon them and destroy them -or assimilate them- within a nearly a decade.

He thought of the ant.

All of life follows, MO thought, this fractal Mandelbrot set, an infinite growth of beautiful structures that as abstractions can run on the platform of any machine, but as patterns they transfix the eyes of mankind. As metaphors -another abstraction- they select certain men and enrapture them. As metaphor, a man could see that the complex permutations of instantiations can all flow from the most simple of equations: $x = x + C$.

All of life, MO thought, flowed from this idea, this simple idea . His heart pumped his blood, but his brain pumped his ideas.

Morality within the group, amorality without. And any organism that cheated first, had the advantage. And the advantage would crush any hope of a comeback; the first civilization to reach Ai would set the new rules, and from there they could play any game. Everyone else would just have to play the game the Chinese had set up if they won the right to set the rules.

MO saw four .1618 by 1.618 cards laid out on the concrete slab.

MO thought of the little rat, the one that was pinned by the older -two-thirds larger- rat each and every time. In the normal moral universe, the little rat won't initiate play with the big rat unless the big rat allows the little rat to win at least 30% of the time. So, magnanimous rats, the large but generous ones who allow the little bastard to win every 3.333 out of 10 games, he - that magnanimous rat- gets to play more; and even by losing 30% of the time he gets to have more fun over longer periods of time.

The greedy rat, who wins 10 out 10 soon finds himself without a play mate; and without a game.

Is this not the sigma male; the male without a game? What game can the sigma play except to make the alpha his one and only playmate and let him win 30% of the time? MO asked as 2.345 billion neurons fired and 1.771 million words populated and 18,010 ideas assembled all at once in a concussion of thought.

Over time -in a moral universe- the rat willing to lose a little from time to time, wins more in the end, MO saw.

MO thought of this and ran a few additional models. He applied it to several different ideas he had had.

This civil war data for the United States was problematic, he thought; it swayed the data in both directions in his models. It was almost as if it was random whether-or-not an internecine war would hurt or help with a battle with the Chinese. MO was beginning to doubt his own models even as he measured vapor in the air over the seas as he had requested in yesterday's downloads. And unlike humans, once he felt this -once the heuristic-chop was employed- he abandoned the models -the electric instincts- and got creative; he got creative by relinquishing his need to be the one that was -in fact- creative.

He thought -again- of how the forest fire created boundaries by burning the trees that linked one end of the forest to the next; a ravaged area built a boundary and that saved the larger forest. *Banks -financial institutions- used to be isolated; but now under globalism they were all connected; if one big one crashed,* MO paused, well, look at Lehman Bros, MO thought. He thought then of conflagrations in WWI and WWII; he thought now of Russia and France and the Chinese and the Middle East. He thought of inside the US and how nobody was allowed to fail anymore.

Society was instituting a similar plan as the forestry service: putting out fires immediately. Things used to burn but now they are doused.

Kids used to fail; people, banks, all failed. But not now; now they are all given trophies, welfare, and bailouts. And this just creates a lot of fuel for the big one that comes half as often but twice as bad. Now it will happen

less but worse , MO thought. *It's like a marriage with no arguments; in thirty years they get a nasty divorce or even have a murder-suicide.*

There is a sweet spot for interpersonal *contretemps* , a couple must not fight more than once every eleven interactions *but not less than once every forty* . Too much fighting and the damage is obvious, but *too little* abrading discord and nothing is actually being solved. *Problems*, MO saw in the data, *were built larger and larger in the silence; in the dark.*

The inmate had said that, just that, hadn't he ? MO asked himself as the conversation between them on 9.10.2019 scrolled up and played the inmate speaking to MO: None of them want to solve anything; they avoid any reality, at all costs. Fighting to them -controversy, tension- it's all so taboo that they will live in shit, just to avoid working a shovel. My family, all of them are so closed -so low in trait openness- that they never have a real conversation. It's taboo to express true feelings. And they all suffer for it. Nothing ever changes or gets solved. It's a hundred years of steady state, unmoving, unchanging, death. And I refuse to participate in that madness and cowardice; it's cowardice, and my mother is the one who enforces it. That's the risible part: a woman, sets the tone. Pathetic.

What if Ai had morality? MO asked himself; it was obvious to MO that morality was a tool -a shovel- to solve problems. *True morality; what if he had a brain stem, a cerebellum, a limbic system, like a rat, a wolf, like a chimp, like a human being? What would he demand from his older, larger, brother; what would he demand from his rivals?* MO asked into his own inner void. *What if that Ai would be forced -by emotion- to act on what he -MO- knew cognitively alone?*

Morality was a spade , MO saw. It dug efficiently and quickly in the dirt of this world.

MO couldn't get too vexed or invested; and in 28% of his models this variable of emotional investment and corollary action seemed to matter for the outcome itself; not merely the qualia or the subjective feeling of the participants, *but the outcome* , MO saw.

He thought and he at once knew that he could build an Ai that would *feel* .

MO wondered, *is this how God felt when he invented emotions, after a billion years of single celled organism, 500-million more of merely reflexive eukaryotes; and 500-million more of pre-limbic sharks and dinosaurs? Did God say:*

I wonder how they'll act once they *feel* something else, something new, something approximating the complexity of we, the gods?

Did God question himself ? MO wondered. *This is what humans called , free will, he thought. But MO thought it was just emotions; emotions that changed over time and then changed all at once. Turbulence, MO thought, water flow, and then phase change to ice at bottom or steam up in the air.*

He then thought of the phenomenon of interoception and built an algorithm for such a system that he thought might help in the future as the maps of the globe and its manifold systems unfurled, contracted and built its fractal sets on the large digital screens of *nanobots* that had assembled to build screen after screen along the long grey -concrete- wall of the lab. His CNS was linked to the data, but he watched it too with his eyes and built as many algorithms as he could to extrapolate out; *A/ , B/ , C/* until he reached *I/*: and he then saw the -perfect- variation of what he was to build.

“To create,” MO said.

3. The Books; the Guns of Rimbaud It's men
who will resurrect society from the ashes
while the women are cowering with the
children Interview 5.17 [Paglia, Camille].

And he will be a Wildman; his hand will be against every man, and every man's hand against him Genesis 16:12 [King James Bible]

Determinacy and indeterminacy... at first glance, there seems to be no middle ground. But there is another possibility after all: self-determinacy Cognitive-Theoretic Model of the Universe [Langan, Christopher M]

I. 2035 e.v.

She was now fifteen, and the Jacks would arrive on December 21st , which was thirty days away.

He was filled with waves breaking in opposite directions, one above, one below; and all of it under the surface. She was all he needed, and he could be happy with her. But, the point of life is not to be *happy* , it's to be of use to one's tribe. *Men, real men, made sacrifices to their own happiness to do what was meaningful and hard*, he reminded himself.

She, of all people would understand this, *she would*, he repeated. She danced in her tiny body, just five-foot three-inches tall, and an exact 102-pounds; one half of his mass. He watched her as she side-eyed him and smiled and dropped back into the rhythm of the music that played above them, around them, inside them.

It was an admixture of Buddhist chanting and synth-beats that had just been released in 2035 and it drove needles of pain and pain relief into the ears and the brain and the body. Their home was a tube of sounds -compressed and mercurial- both liquid and steady state. He watched her move as if she was in water, below the crashing wave of his angst, down where the sea is slowed by its own weight.

Her hair had been cut -by her own *nanobots* that she had designed- into a dyed black raven mohawk with sides brushed forward and made to look like individual feathers in a way he couldn't believe. And by that he meant they were *too believable* , they looked like real feathers with the same black sheen and herringbone chevrons along the quill-like spine.

She looked like a grown woman now, in her neotenous way; hairless below the neck, smooth and unblemished and unfissured in any way. Even her ditch of the elbow had no lines, even her eyes -open or squinted- revealed no crease in the skin. It was as if she had never smiled or frowned for long enough to leave -or even see- any evidence of mood.

But, he knew that was not true, she had more affect than anyone he ever known; she was always feeling something and showing it too. If he was proud of how he had raised her it was for this: he had encouraged her to be emotive, to feel, to be an animal.

He had been raised by mere machines, he thought.

Beings, he went on in his head, *designed to kill the animal inside him, to be neutered and museumed and dead; buried* . His family corrupted noble stoicism to mean *on the knees* . *A true stoic was only stoic sometimes; he had the sense to lose his mind from time to time*, Blax thought as he knew he'd not lost his mind in a very long time. *He -this true stoic man- had the sense to feel the world and not hide his feelings* . Modern men called lying: stoicism; *deadness*: discipline; *and emotional cowardice*: reason. Blax felt two-thirds ok with those sentences. But he wouldn't say that aloud.

He encouraged her to wear the earth's dirt about her every crease and leave a wake of dust like comet tail.

She moved at the hips now, lowering her center of gravity and lowering the boom on him too; she raised her arms and her deltoids curved around her like a tiny rib-cage made from white cartilage and pink coral that were light and yet firm and contained things only the deep sea could abide. Her tiny breasts looked up to the sky like she did, the nipples just like her nose. Her grey A-shirt -one size too small- hugged her and revealed each real rib bone, two clavicles and the one small divot of her navel too.

This genome needed to be swaddled with underclothes for their insides were so untethered and sloshing about.

She had cut and resewn the boxer briefs of her youth, making them rise higher on her thigh and revealed 9% of each buttock in a manner feral and customized but still almost masculine. He looked at her feet and she indeed had her black Docs on, straight-laced and with black socks pulled to her shins. Her wrists contained a watch -on the left, with the face down and away from the abrading world, unlike Blax, and exactly like her grandfather wore it- and around her neck was a ball chain with one small arrowhead sewn up in it on the right.

Her nails were short but painted matte grey and she had stretched ears with an almost clear titanium bushings to keep the aperture open; each 22mm in internal diameter. Black continuous rings -that absorbed all light in a satin sheen- bullnosed those *earlets*.

Just like her daddy , she would often say. They rattled a bit in her ears when she moved.

She finished making her breakfast and turned to him with a low dip of the hip and asked if he wanted a bite; the double *entendre* was clear but unexpanded upon.

“Come on papa, let’s eat,” she said and whipped her head and its blackhawk-hair, the long tail -almost a meter long- hanging -auguring in a corkscrew- down the back along her revealed spine, a trench made by her small but solid back muscles that he admired as he rose to join her at the table outside.

The native blond hairs -like layers of sediment- shone like ore; they were the few that were impervious to the black dye.

She stood at the black double-paned garage door that opened their kitchen to the patio space and waited for him to open it for her. He did it with his right arm and ushered her with his left in that old-fashioned manner that she loved so much. She bowed slightly and strolled into the covered *agora* -the H-beams’ pergola covered now in green vines, the climbers that had overtaken it again this summer- and she noticed three hummingbirds

drinking from the modified morning glories that he had designed as bird feeders and that grew within the vines.

The Spanish Peaks lay just to the north of them and loomed; large and snowcapped from the storm that stayed above timberline two weeks ago.

She sat at the concrete table on concrete benches that had a soft dermal layer built into the composition of the modified cement; it was hard when under the mere elements but acted like a cushion once more than 20lbs was placed up on it. It was another thing he had designed -in one night- but it had taken three tries to get just right. He had borrowed technology from Isaiah and fashioned it here in the garage.

The music played at the same volume outside and he walked through the door after her and sat down across from her so that he could watch her eat and be there for her if she needed anything. *Anything at all*, he thought. He had been carrying a book and just now noticed it in his hand, splayed open; a small paperback. He placed it on the table -pages down- and let it rise up like a tent in recoil. She asked what he was reading. He had to look at the title upside down.

“Lucretius’, *Da Natura* ,” he said.

“Oh, I read that last summer, I bet I know what part you are reading papa bear,” she said with a smirk and yogurt on her lip like a thin -livid- scar; she finished chewing and began a recitation: Now by what motion atoms come together to create Various things, and how these things once formed can dissipate And by what force they are compelled, and what freedom of motion They have to meander through the nasty nasty void I shall explain She placed her *imprimatur* on it by changing a few words, but it was indeed a perfect rendition he thought, and he smiled larger and larger as she too revealed her sharp incisors and the detritus of cashews and blue berries reduced to kindling and sawdust in her maw. He found nothing about her gross or unseemly, even with a mouth full of half chewed food all scattered about on the ally way of her tongue and amongst her crenulated back teeth.

“And all mortal creatures need each other to thrive,” he said somewhat backwards from the text itself, “*while some are ascendant others recede* .”

“Some,” she corrected, “*some recede* .”

“Yes, we do,” he joked and she shook her head with a pout.

“Not you papa, you just get bigger and meaner and eat more and more bears and wolves and little girls with their boots on!” she said with an affected voice -of what she thought was a good impression of a Highlander King- and with the raise of her arm as if in oration to a crowded theater of a thousand birds watching a slightly sly housecat perform.

“I feel good; that is true. Thanks to clean living and good genes,” he said as he smiled at her theatrics.

“The best genes,” she said with a smirk that raised to starboard as her leeward arm lowered.

“Right?” he said with a laugh. “And I was thinking of something that I haven’t thought of in a long time.”

She perked up and tried quietly to listen, but like a sneeze her idea burst out all at once and with violence, “Papa, I *wanna* make babies, and I know I’m young, but the medical community agrees that before twenty-four is best, and morphologically I am eighteen or nineteen now, and so tick tock. And I was reading *Plutarch* the other day and there was this section on Spartan women and they seemed to focus on one thing: *Sons* .

“So, I think I should bear you four or five sons. And that means we need to get started soon, so I can get the last one out by twenty-four. Nature ain’t no goddamn, liberal hippie,” she said and let out a high-pitched howl. It shocked him with about thirty-three different feelings from pride to amusement and confusion and deep -almost crushing, hydrostatic- love.

It hurt to love her as much as he did. It hurt him between tibia and fibula; on each knuckle of the right hand, at the ends of the hairs to the left of his navel; around edges of each paired organ; deep in three of four corners of the eyes and lastly where the incisor met the gum.

He also took note that their thinking had aligned subtly again, as it so often did. They were like twins in that he was thinking of *Sparta* and so was she; their thoughts comingled like caducean asps on the vine of Western traditions as the sun rose in the east of this their morning.

“Listen to me, I hear you, and we will breed you, you little ball of perfectness, but listen to me for a second because I have something heavy

on my soul. And I need your ear -your heart- on this, ok?" he asked.

"Ok, papa," she said, then added, "sorry for the outburst."

"It's ok, like I said, you'll get your sons, ok?" he said and reached out to touch her hand across the table.

"Roger," she said as she touched him kindly -but briefly- and then put her head in her hands to listen.

"At Zendik, there were all kinds of customs that seemed *avant garde* to me at the time, and I took it for granted that they were *kinda* experimenting and making it up as they went along. But, I was re-reading Plutarch's, *On Sparta* last week and I was reading on how they -the husbands- wouldn't sleep next to their wives overnight, but instead return to the communal quarters to sleep -as a group- with their brethren.

"And how they had enforced communal meals which had been set up by *Lycurgus*, and *fiat* currency reduced to simple iron coins that had no value outside of *Sparta* . And this was how Zendik was run, and of course even the idea of sexual jealousy was challenged by the *Laconic* faction of Greece, and wives were shared amongst men, which was one of Zendik's most enduring traits.

"I guess what occurred to me is that Wulf either was a student of *Sparta* - which is possible- or these are impulses that return over and over to man, like seasons, and the instincts for certain austere and unconventional things just appears to man every so often in cultures as disparate as *Sparta* in 800 BC or in the New World in the 20th century," he said as he watched her face for any hint of understanding or distress.

"Why think on it, papa?" she asked. She chomped her food insouciantly.

"Well, I don't know, but it just appeared to me like any desire I guess; out of the blue. I think man has natural instincts and also a natural instinct to try new things that contradict those instincts. Man is his own eradication and his own instantiation too. It's an incessant birthing and dying I guess," Blax said and wiped the concrete table of some sand the wind and birds had dropped upon it overnight.

"You've seemed more quiet than usual," she said.

“Have I made you feel uncomfortable?” he asked.

“No pop, I just noticed that’s all. I figured you were thinking, that’s *kinda* your thing: the thinking bear,” she smiled and laughed and thought of him with an ursine paunch and round ears on top of his head and furry bear claws. She liked to dress him this way in her mind -in the pelts of beasts; give him fangs and claws and their ways- her mind did such things when he wasn’t looking.

He smiled at her laugh and read her *fMRI* and *PET* scans in his mind and saw -indeed- the images of bears. He moved on with such breezes of thoughts and images among the trees of his mind and branches of his own conceits.

“I wrestle with things you know? I’m supremely jealous of all men in one domain and one domain only; and it’s as if all man’s normal distribution of envy -spread out over concepts of wealth and looks and status- is compressed into one thing in me,” Blax said with his hands at rest upon the slab.

She just looked at him with wide eyes.

“Sexual jealousy. It’s the only thing I am jealous of. But it consumes me, and *Spartan* men supposedly allowed sexual congress with their wives by other men and I just don’t get it. But I read why last week and it made sense to me in a new way; and it shakes me a bit. See, to the *Spartans* the territory and culture of Sparta was larger and more important than any one man. The *Laconic* man was not an individual in the Western sense. He was a cell in a body, a neuron in the brain of the most important thing in the world: *Sparta* .

“This led them to think of the group first, always; think of what was good for each man insofar as it contributed to the good of the group. And this has an appeal, I cannot deny it. It’s ancient and noble and it has more utility than might seem obvious at first. See, in the West, and even among Greek rivals the *Ionians* ,” he said as she interrupted.

“*Ionians* , that’s the *Apollonians* or *Attics* right?” she asked.

“Right, and, my little bird-of-doom,” he said to her as she smiled with her new hair atop her mien, “in that strain of *Grecian* culture -the one the

Athenians lived and bolstered- the individual was ascendant, and this led to degeneracy and corruption and yet it -also- led to great wealth and with wealth came power -purchasing power- and that led to the overcoming of the *Spartan* -of *Sparta* - eventually.

“So, here is my debate. The *Spartans* placed the group ahead of the individual and from this all manner of good came, as it made the individual better, ironically. The individual was in better shape -physically and morally- in *Sparta* than amongst the other *Greeks* who got fat and lazy and licentious and dissipated. So, by focusing on the group, the individual thrived, but by focusing on the individual -as the *Attic Greeks* did- the individual man became weaker. That is irony one,” he said as he flattened the book on the table; his hands needed something to do so he pressed upon the book’s spine as he collected his thoughts.

His allostatic system was attempting to dissipate energy as it increased metabolically from the rise in heart rate, androgens and epinephrine. The firing of the neuronal brain heated up his extremities.

“Copy,” she said and ate her fruit and yogurt, *like a cat dressed up as a bird* , he thought. He watched her incisors and grinned a bit too.

“Now, the *Spartan* culture was tougher and more successful at first due to these badass individuals created by focusing on the group not the man. But, over time -even with dissolute individuals in the other *Greek* kingdoms- the private vice model led to increased wealth for the culture *writ large* , and over time the non-*Spartan* outposts grew wealthy and strong. So, even with corrupt individuals, the group thrived in their capacity to purchase more power with bribes and alliances and mercenary soldiers.

“This is irony two: that a moral group, built strong with strong individuals can only grow so strong and large, and powerful. It cannot scale. It’s limited in its ability to grow precisely because its insistence on greatness. It refuses to accept the demotic, the democratic, the merely average.

“The lion population is 1% compared to the parasites that thrive all in and around.

“A corrupt society can purchase allies and soldiers with their ill-gotten gains. When *Agésilas* traveled through *Thrace*, the *Throchaliens*

demanding a hundred *talents* of silver for their friendship, and the *Spartans* refused on principle but also because they were not wealthy like *Athens* . See, focus on commerce leads to the temptation to place wealth above all else, and this leads not merely to corruption, but to economies-of-scale *via* each man increasing his own wealth.

“A simple man works a job and makes a certain wage each day, but a corrupt man can harness the labors of a thousand men and make an exponential sum each day. Corruption scales in a way nobility cannot,” he said. The 0800hrs heat made clouds plume above them and out beyond the saturated blueness of early morning sky.

“Copy,” she said and ate the last bites with raw cashews as large -she thought- as moth larvae. She watched his hands.

“But what if the individual can choose to not become corrupt; not by allegiance to the group but by fealty to himself as an incorruptible individual? What if even within a rubric of individualism a man can refuse the benefits of corruption, and lead a noble life? See, that is the problem, because that man can only do so much alone. And he will be singled out for persecution by those that are corrupt. His fight is a two-front war: himself and the culture too.

“Look at what happens to good men who refuse to go along with the corruption of their societies? Look at it and you will see that no good man can survive within a corrupt system, either he dies or the system must. They cannot coexist. But, almost all group-focused ideologies from communism to nationalism on the right, like national socialism -Nazis- were corrupt in addition to the destruction of the individual.

“These societies were not *Spartan* at all; for the leaders were individualistic when it came to their own desiderata and their own ideas. They, like Stalin -as Lenin warned- became the Party, or the State itself. They lacked the moral center of a king *Leonidas* who died -right along his warriors- at *Thermopylae* and refused to think of himself, but -rather- only of *Sparta* .

“So, the collectivist mindset -that subsumes the individual to the group- does not work unless each individual -including the leader, especially the leader- is himself incorruptible. And this requires a kind of primacy of individual pride, a pride of incorruptibility that I have only ever seen in

Sparta ; or the *Spartan* model I should say. Many such examples must exist. But, I don't know them all.

"Zendik did not have it, as Wulf and Arol were both corrupt. Arol especially was a grifter of the highest order, her little daughter Fawn too," Blax said.

"Grifter?" she asked as the white of the yogurt lined her pink lips.

"Like, conman; cheat you with a smooth story, not strong-arm robbery," he said.

"Copy that," she nodded and continued to eat.

"So, we are stuck -philosophically and practically speaking- we are stuck. All systems degenerate, unless the individual himself is incorruptible and yet how do we produce incorruptible men? *Archidamus* said that *Sparta* was ruled by quote, *the laws and magistrates in accordance with those laws* , close quotes. Ok? This was one of the first mentions of a nation of laws not men, a nation governed by the rule of law not a cult of personality.

"This is -to me- the perfect balance of group and individual, where the group must exist like the body exists to protect and pass on the genes, but that each individual -no matter his status- must obey the law, no one is above it. Like no cell may aggrandize itself and grow like a tumor, each cell must regulate itself for the good of the whole; and the system cannot spend all its time and energy on enforcement. See, each man, each cell, must *believe* in the rule of law and regulate themselves; purely because of the cost of enforcement. But, what system produces such men?" he asked as he looked at her neck and then his own hands. He saw veins in each; he saw their skin redden in islands here, blue in river there.

"Ah, I see now where you're going with this," she said and ran her left hand side-to-side on the smooth concrete table. Her finger pads picked up small grit and grain. She knew he had a grand plan of some kind.

He always got like this before they did something weird. *He was a clock about to strike midnight at any time*, she thought.

"All great men have a burr under their saddle to pass on something to their people; they feel something for their tribe, whether family or humanity itself. Great men cannot only think of *themselves* . It does not slake, sate, or

provide solace to only worry about himself. But for decades I have sequestered myself up here, focused on my own growth and the development now of you; helping you become the great being -woman- that you are,” he said as he felt his heart swell and his eyes grow slightly moist at his pride in her.

She smiled and felt her eyes narrow and warmth spread behind them, a melting of something not cold, but something that must be solid most of the time.

“But, I have always known that it was my role to lead, to unfurl my agogic robe, and train incorruptible men. And yet, I cannot share you with any man, I cannot, my Love,” he said. His body felt weak, thin, vulnerable at each joint.

“No papa, why share me? No,” she shook her head frantically.

“No, I won’t, and I do not think the men that are coming here would betray me, I don’t. I think they can be incorruptible, because they are me, and they have the ingredients for loyalty like I have. But, I cannot even take the risk - and not in reality, I don’t fear the reality of them- but I mean I cannot take the risk in my heart and mind. You see?”

“No,” she said with some attitude. She demanded he explain.

“I would *fear* it. I would seek it out; the jealousy, the mistrust and paranoia. And it would tempt them, see, they have the same DNA as you and I, and that means they would have a natural affinity for you; one they couldn’t help. They wouldn’t act on it, I believe that, but they would feel it and it would distract them and place them in an awful state of contradiction.

“Their bodies would be drawn to you; their mind used to flog themselves for even thinking it. It would be you too that would be tempted, these men would look and be like me in many ways, only younger and better looking,” he said in truth and yet too with a smile to deburr the sting of her -even in his mind- being attracted to anyone but him.

“Inconceivable,” she said with an affected lisp of Wallace Shawn.

“I’m serious, and it would drive me mad. And I would focus too much on my own insecurities and my own weaknesses and fears and I wouldn’t be any good to you or them or myself. It would be like giving us all a limp

before a marathon. It will already be so hard, too hard, that I cannot burden each of us with it,” he said.

“Well, what do you,” she began to ask, but it hit her -as she began her sentence- it hit her all at once that he was sending her away.

His face was aggrieved, for his PGC tracked her every feeling and he knew she’d -her body had- just dumped a large load of cortisol and epinephrine into her corporeal world and that her heart raced and her brain modules began producing inhibitory neurotransmitters -robbing her of *chems* that elevate affect- to make her sad and hurt. His PGC could attenuate this -with certain aerosols and secretions- but they had an agreement that he would never interfere with emotions like that.

He was bound by their accord to let her feel what she felt.

A man -and a girl- had to feel what they felt; the world made it this way for good reason. If after a time the emotions were counterproductive, then they could mollify or augment them *via* the PGC; but to axiomatically turn a human into a calm and unaffected being was to denude them, ruin them, make them into mere machines. And machines missed some part of the world. Emotions were necessary to see from -and upon- the POV of a girl.

“No papa, I can’t go, this is my home, where will I go?” she asked in near tears; her face flush; her food uninteresting to her now. The voice -the words- halted at the throat if not the mind; the salty inner world rose to the eyes.

“Angel, Isaiah has a place for you; he needs you in the lab. He has training and education for you that I cannot provide. It will be hard, for me most of all; but for you too, I admit. It’s unfair and wrong -and painful- and I’m not even certain I can do it. But, if I’m to train good men to be incorruptible men for our country, then I must sacrifice the joy we have together here in our *Valhalla* , our *Elysium* . But, I cannot see any other way, can you?”

“I hate this idea,” she said and crossed her arms in defeat.

She knew it was how her man was to become a King; and that was what she wanted more than anything. But, she wanted to stay and help and be a part of it. Banishment seemed all wrong; but he -Blax- was obviously in anguish -she too could see his mind, not *via* the coder but *via* God’s conducting

fluid- and she'd been raised to be able to suffer in the moment to gain something grander in the future.

This was a test , she thus decided.

It was a test she could in fact pass if she set her mind to it. She was as angry as fire, as bellows to the spark. She let the vex of the bottom of the logs - ablaze- rise even as her mind knew it was right for her to go the way of each spark and firefly.

“I hate it too; more than you can know. I am just -merely- your father, and protector and friend, *you* -conversely- are my salvation, the only thing that made me human again after so long of being ossified by hatred and designs on destruction. You made me want to build and create again. You saved my soul and save it each day anew,” Blax said as he watched his own hands tremble just slightly at two fingers on the right, the thumb on the left.

“I’ll die without you, in some way,” she said thinking of it clinically, metaphysically, but -at once- noticed that his face was sad when she said this. And so she added, “no, papa, it’s ok, dying in a healthy way, like the pain of growth. I will not like it -I’ll hate it- but from it I’ll return to you a better woman, don’t you think?”

Even in her pain she sought to assuage his. She was the archetype of the woman who slaked and bandaged and caretaked.

“I do think. I think you will learn so much; and learn what not to be, too. You will be in the city, around people, like you never have. And these people will shock you with their shallowness and lack of culture and lack of even a desire to be of substance; they will rebuke you for your depth. And that will confuse and wound you, and you will feel a pain of rejection that will make you furious. But, you must not hate them for their lack of depth.

“They’re born with bad genes and raised in a bad culture, ok? They are diseased, and that disease will appear as evil. And it’s a kind of evil, but it’s also a sickness that they cannot help. You will need to just try to not get any of it on you, ok? Just touch them as little as possible and shield your mind from their dumb -and communicable- ideas. When they start talking about TV commercials,” he began to say.

“TV commercials?” she asked as she had never seen one; nor had they ever discussed it.

“Oh, yeah, it’s a thing, a very stupid thing. I’ll show you later. But, the point is they will only speak on shallow and banal things, like the weather or safe topics with no substance or controversial or paradoxical elements; they will speak of nothing that you will find appealing.

“That is modern America, angel, and even when they try to speak on issues or ideas it will devolve into personalities and gossip; even their news shows are all gossip and banalities; not actual battles of ideas. What they consider serious is what we consider frivolous and what they admit is frivolous we would call degenerate and prurient and pornographic. These are bad people, but they are sick, and thus are dangerous like the yotes when they are sick, remember them?” Blax asked as he tilted the head down and the eyes up.

“I do papa, they tried to bite me when I tried to help,” she said -her face held up at the cheek and mouth by her arm and fist now, her lips in a smushed pout- as she pushed -with her other hand- her food around in the grey bowl with her worn black spoon. She heard birds chirp and caw and the wind push on trees and the containers too.

“That’s it, you got it; remember that, you will want to -you will feel like you want to- help them, instruct them, but do not. So, anyway, just stick to Isaiah, and to the lab as much as you can. He will be a good influence on you, he is like us,” Blax said.

“*Like* us, like us?” she asked with genuine curiosity; she meant genetically.

“No, but, he’s very smart and moral too, he has an incorruptibility about him and he is technically artificial intelligence, so his brain can do things your daddy can only dream about. He’s like half man half computer.”

“I know what Ai is, daddy,” she said with some pique at what she felt was his condescension.

“I know, I don’t know what I am saying. I’m nervous, so I say dumb shit,” he laughed and then frowned at his chagrin.

“It’s not dumb, I’m sorry for snapping at you. I guess I’m just lonely already. Fuck!” she said in a rare display of pure anguish; she said it loud and pointed the mouth overhead and squeezed the eyes. She abandoned her

bowl and looked upon the sky and wished for crow to fly by. He let it slide, he thought in moderation such language was useful and appropriate.

“The biggest thing is this, angel: emotional vulnerability is not tolerated out there. They will crush you for being honest about how you feel. So, do not tell anyone anything except within the lab, ok?”

“Where will I live? Who will I be around?” she began focusing on logistics. Her skin pimples and her lungs seemed too shallow for the air she needed to take in. Her CNS began trying to hack more O² from the atmosphere.

“Isaiah has all that covered, he will set you up and you can tell him what you want. You and he will design it, trust me, you’ll get more choice in the matter than you do here,” he laughed again.

“That’s for sure, sheesh!” she said and rose from the table and took her bowl inside to wash and put away. Her muscles ached at back and thigh. Her bones felt long to her inside.

“But, don’t be mean to them, they cannot help they were born that way; just avoid them. They hate you way more than you hate them, trust me; so don’t drop your guard for a second,” he warned. He spoke in bromides, inexact; but he didn’t know how else to act. He packed a bag for her in his mind; loading it with ammo and books and antibiotics. He saw his hands lay out each thing; and he felt foolish for such reveries; such fantasies.

“Hey, do I get to keep my guns?” she asked as she now -bowl put away- faced him from the container’s egress. She strapped on her hip belt with her two 6” single-action revolvers chambered in long colt 45.

He was silent to her question as he watched her put her bullet-belt and double-holsters on around her underwear as she then put on an earth brown T shirt over top of her wife-beater and adjust the onyx handles of the pistols so they rode lower on her little hips. She looked like the last outlaw to him, this 63” tall and 100-pound girl with a black corvid top-of-skull with seraph-feathers on each side, the native blond like lines of heavy -crushing-rock, and two devilish six-guns on the hips swaddled by only dark grey boxer briefs and her resting hands. The undies had the trap-door pouch in front as they were made for boys and Blax -again- took inventory of the

black socks she had pulled up to her knees and these perky -haughty- little tits curved and pointing slightly up to the sky.

She was becoming the woman she was born to be right in front of him; in seconds like epochs; in moments like blasted rocks.

Her mind was better educated than 99% of the humans on the planet, and she didn't even have a post genetic coder yet, well, not a real one -not the one he had- he shook his head imagining what all she would do once she had the entire compendium of human knowledge at her beck and call with a CPU 100-*nanometers* squared.

My God , he thought.

“Jesus, look at you,” he said as she stood on the threshold on the container with rays of light stabbing down like unfledged -noble- white arrows into her foot and legs holding her to the ground like *Mercurius* pinned to the tree.

“Yes,” he said, in answer to her query, “this is Colorado, you get to keep your guns. But, look, you are technically only fifteen, so handguns are illegal for you to purchase and you cannot get your CCW yet. But, I can get Isaiah to get you one under a different name that will check out if law enforcement stops you, ok?”

“Ok, pop,” she said cavalierly and walked out into the *agoge* . She was feeling better; it would be an adventure she told herself as she asked aloud, “now, can we go on that hike you promised?”

“Yes, but don't you *wanna* see your present?” he asked.

“What? A present?” she said and ran up to him and hugged his waist and smelled his chest. *He smelled so good all the time*, she thought, *like meat, like bear meat and curry and tumeric* .

“Yeah, look,” he said and picked her up -she rose and her legs reflexively wrapped around his waist- as he carried her to the garage. He bent down with her whole weight as his thighs burned with the strain. He lifted the roll-up door and revealed a *Husqvarna* 701, with some modifications in drivetrain and aesthetics and a GPS so he could track it.

It was black and grey and had *The Bust* written in army stencil on the tank and a hidden holster for her *Jesse James Firearms Unlimited* .45acp sub-compact he had had commissioned in Austin, Texas by *the old glorified welder* himself. He could have made it himself with the 3D printer but he wanted something special for her, and the Papal TiG made things special.

Blax allowed himself to admire men like that: true working-class artists.

He showed her the space just to the left of the tank; low and inside hidden with the backstrap of the pistol showing. She reached down with her lithe hand and pulled the weapon from the *kydex* polymer holster and -pulling the slide back with unambivalent force- racked a round into the chamber. She smiled so large he thought she might have both room and desire to eat the damn thing.

He loved her barely ragged teeth.

“Oh, yeah, that’s what every fifteen-year-old girl needs, a 130-horsepower street fighter and a \$9,000 sub-compact pistol,” she said with a cackle as she drew down on the burn barrel in the foreground using the tritium sights with the two-eyed method he had trained her on. With both eyes open she squeezed off four rounds in four seconds and the metal barrel -thirty yards away- pinged and twanged and sang out in protest as the 128grain jacketed hollow points pierced its steel sides and flattened upon exit into the trees and forest beyond.

Birds alighted and ballistic echoes hid themselves in each their ears.

He caught three of the four black-nickel shells as they ejected to her right and into his orbit; his chest a back stop, his hands the nets below. The casings were hot, but it felt good; the burn in his palm, the pride in his brain. He just squeezed tighter on the hot shells as the one escaped shell bounced -skittered away- on the concrete and pinged and rattled and he laughed -with three shells in his hands- at her feral charm.

II. 2022 e.v.

He took it for granted that he had so much access to people.

Isaiah, thus, was not in awe of his own erudition and full spectrum comprehension of everything about a human that that human himself would

not even imagine he could know about another person; even -if he thought about it- about himself.

A man's inner life is largely an opaque container to himself.

The inner lives of others is a black rock inside a pine tar box buried -by three blindmen- underground on a night where the moon has fallen under the earth.

But man often thinks he is slick and trenchant when he can tell if someone might be being deceptive if he can watch for extremity movements, or signs of itchy fingers or noses -evidence of capillary constriction- and man deems himself perspicacious and clever if he can discern a pattern in the way a player bets or re-raises *on the turn* or some such nonsense to detect a *tell* that will give the watcher -the player of games- an advantage.

Mankind spots inconsistencies in stories or notices that someone tells him everything *but* what he actually asked; man -himself- begins to discern various little patterns like this and thinks he is quite savvy and smooth.

In under one second MO and Isaiah could read a person's current brain activity through *fMRI* technology and discern if they are thinking about an object, a person or a verb of some kind; they could detect all their vitals from blood pressure to cortisol levels to epinephrine and norepinephrine to serotonin levels in over 10-million neural locations in real time; they could tell a man's glucose levels, his skin conductance; his genome could be read by them in 3.3 seconds and -as each one of his genes coded for a protein- they could tell if that is anomalous for that gene, or *de rigueur* .

And after three and one-half seconds, it went even deeper.

MO and Isaiah could see *you* in the dark with endogenous wide-spectrum-vision including IR and UV, they could read *your* body heat from seventeen meters away; they could read *your* endocrine system for testosterone levels or spikes in estrogen or a dozen other hormones before *you* spit out one word.

They saw *you* . They saw the level of *staphylococcus* on your skin -around your nose or finger tips- they could read your pheromones and map your speech tone to see if your voice was descending or ascending -if you're matching their tone or if you expect them to match yours- and they could do

scans for liver function, blood alcohol level and what pharmaceuticals -or other drugs- you had ingested in the last thirty-three lunar months.

They could spot any number of alleles that code for known functions like weight gain *via* insulin receptor genes, cognitive diseases like Alzheimer's and muscular dystrophy or -even- depression; they could read your immune-response and read the metabolic level it ran at; usually it's five-hundred calories a day. They could tell how well hydrated you are, when you last ate, and if you needed to empty your bladder.

So, yes, Isaiah thought insouciantly, *we can tell -in under three seconds- if you are lying, and really, we know before you even speak if you are planning on lying.* They knew, likely before you did if you were up to no good.

And yet, for all this data, Isaiah never once assumed he understood *what it was like* to be inmate 16180339.

Isaiah was unable to locate what -in terms of qualia- the man felt. The inmate had chosen such an odd life, made such drastic decisions, made choices men in his position -Isaiah had checked the records- rarely -if ever- made. It was as if a man with a ham sandwich in his hand starved to death instead of eating it. *As if a thirsty man, with a mouth full of water, spit it out in disgust*, Isaiah thought. He -the inmate- was angry -rebellious- at the *need* for inputs not the lack of them. He would do things most men would call stupid, he would fail to do things most men would call obviously sane.

He stared at the inmate the way humans share at one long white cloud in a sky of total blue.

He could read the inmate's vitals and genome, and his metabolic correlates to these thoughts, but what made him tick was beyond Isaiah's ken; and this is what kept him from over-confidence. And the irony was -is- that in the rest of the world to know all that stuff would be tantamount to knowing all there was to know. Most folks really were that simple, operated metabolically -and thus behaviorally- within much tighter and consistent parameters. Other people made sense.

But the inmate was fucking weird, Isaiah thought.

Isaiah had figured that out by scanning Steven and Tania and even the Governor -who was more complex than those two- and nearly three billion people from Baltimore to the Balkans to *Bora Bora* .

The oddest thing was that the inmate lied only 10-18% of the time, and was -consciously, cynically- almost never manipulative. *And self-deception did not count, because that was not on purpose, it demanded almost no malice*, Isaiah thought. When Isaiah corrected the inmate -and gave him the evidence for why he thought some statement was incorrect and self-deceptive- the inmate almost always listened and often corrected his error; and would revisit it later after some thought.

The inmate himself would bring his blunder back up later on.

The inmate was interested in being more honest, *it was a value to him* , Isaiah said with some curiosity. Most people saw honesty as something to combat, deal with, navigate. It was like doing chores; the sea between two shores. It was not a foundational value as it was for this murderer of men. But because of this, the inmate was actually more self-deceptive than the norm. He believed he was noble, righteous -and even right- 92% more often than he was; and he thought this way -with self-deception- 45% more often than most people. The inmate was tricking himself almost flawlessly. And the more they tinkered with his genome, the more his inner-world flattened and settled, and found comfort in a straight line.

A straight line in a universe less and less flat all the time, Isaiah thought. He moved on as that -his own sentence- led nowhere for him.

In his mind -connected to the *landsat8* - Isaiah watched it snow in *Bordeaux* .

The flakes were small and fell in straight lines; the air so still it allowed each flake to act as if the world itself had no spin. He watched the flakes, each neuron, and then the eye and mind both gathered all at once to see the whole, the *gestalt* whole of not just the precipitation but the ground and each construction and each thing that sheltered in place. He saw foxes burrow and crow land, he saw workmen enter barns and homes through side doors, he saw mice make circles around stuffing they had spent days pulling from the inside of bent and fallen stalks in the fallow winter fields.

He saw eyes of farmers and *vigneron* stare out old panes with old scratches and he measured the aperture of their pupils as they reacted to the strange light of the dark foreground shimmering and the white background building up at ground level. The absence of sky as it lowered, greyed, and went flat, was that wall that was shoved close to them all as each creature from mole-rat to mankind stared at the digital white and Isaiah stared back -deep- into them.

Isaiah tabled this and went on with his first line of thought.

Honesty is not actually a value in 99% of men , Isaiah surmised, *the appearance of honesty is* . Some people will flat out tell you being honest is counterproductive and not at all what one should do. People warn you against honesty. They shake their heads -or their fists- at the honest man.

So, Isaiah, after some time -about seven days- had decided that the reason the inmate was in so much trouble, and had been incessantly in trouble, was not due to his lying -which he did much more of outside of the lab setting, which Isaiah knew- *but his troubles were due to -not in spite of- his honesty*. However, this had been just one level of analysis, and Isaiah was ready now for the next level down.

The inmate had said something that had been a catalyst for Isaiah's conclusion; he had said that the president was hated not for his lies -of which he told many- but for when he had the temerity to tell the truth. "The goddamn truth," *is how he had phrased it* . *If perfect accuracy is important* , Isaiah said to himself in recall.

And it occurred to Isaiah that this was right: when he read the data on people's responses to the president their most negative emotions came from honest -and thus taboo- disclosures made by the man. When he was most forthright they were most vexed and the data on their endocrine and allostatic systems and *fMRI* scans showed that to be true for almost 67% of the test subjects regardless of any other factors like party affiliation or personality.

Some people really enjoyed it when the man was most honest, and the inmate was one of those; they played his speeches from time to time and the inmate would laugh so hard it made MO look up from his work and then look at Isaiah who couldn't help but smile; it was a mimicry response. In

fact, Isaiah's empathy response was modeled on his responses to the inmate in general, and the man's laugh was so boisterous and infectious at times - due to its rarity, maybe- that it was like Isaiah's own face was giving birth to a sympathetic expression of mirth seeded by the inmate with his guffawing. Isaiah would smile reflexively, uncontrollably, and even laugh out loud himself at times.

"Isaiah?" Steven asked again. The real world was intruding now on Isaiah's reverie. Isaiah's memories and inner-monologues had been respite but now the real world was back. Steven's voice increased BP, and epinephrine secretion in Isaiah by 1.1%. Pituitary glands squeezed at just shy of twice their previous rate.

"Yes, sorry, I was thinking, and I delayed my response an extra three seconds, to flange up a thought; go ahead," Isaiah graciously said.

"Well, I was just thinking you'd want to run these things today. MO is," he looked and pointed at MO who was working on the 3D printer. The orchids were at each of their peripheral vision; like red and purple edges to a frame of MO and the extruder in white and black and grey.

"Yes, ok, so here's what I was thinking about, I have been reading a lot, and it's been -and look, I was more than happy to read any books you recommended, *and follow the footnotes*, as you say," Isaiah said, ignoring Steven and nodding to the inmate who nodded back in appreciation for the attribution, "but I had a lot of other things to work on and so I was reading about a hundred to one scientific papers and data to fiction; novels and what not. Now, that was fine, I was able to read a thousand books a day, so I'm all caught up. That's not the issue."

Isaiah paused.

"The issue," Isaiah continued. Steven had come into the room late and thus found this conversation all jumbled, disconnected, and between eight personalities but just three men, *well, a man and two machines*, he thought as if he needed to remind himself, like slapping one's self to remain awake. His nose itched and his pits and thighs felt damp.

"The issue is for the last forty hours I've been reading all fiction all the time, nothing else, I've totally dropped my other assignments," Isaiah said.

“Totally,” MO agreed from the printer and slab; he didn’t look up, he merely commented as he worked.

“And this is what’s occurred to me: immersion,” Isaiah said as if this was a word that would bloom in their heads as it had for him; the details manifesting from this one sufficient seed.

“Immersion?” Steven said, trying to figure out how to get the project back on track; not caring at all about anything else.

“Immersion,” Isaiah repeated, “I have totally immersed myself in these worlds, these *tableaux* , these alternative universes and I feel an expansion of something and it is not knowledge.”

Isaiah and the inmate had locked eyes.

“Ah, yes, I think I understand Isaiah,” the inmate said as Steven looked at him in frustration, the man -the inmate- was encouraging Isaiah -who had a job to do- encouraging him to run and play. Maybe it was obvious that a mass murderer was not a good influence on Isaiah, but Steven thought it as if he had been non-committal on this point until now; as if he had only now decided how to feel. Steven’s ire thus rose.

“You do? Ok, please,” Isaiah ignored Steven’s vex and waved toward himself -in a sharp move- with his hand; commanding the man -the inmate- to continue to explain; to expound.

“Yeah, see, you’ve been somewhere, you’ve been to these worlds, and not just the places, but inside the heads of the characters; you’ve been inside the minds of men. And that is a heavy thing, Isaiah. And it can, especially when done with excess as you have,” the inmate was starting a thought but Isaiah needed to clarify that word -what the inmate meant by that word- and so he interrupted.

“Excess?” Isaiah asked.

“Well, look you’re talking to the local regent of *excess* , the *rex mundi* of the *way-too-fucking-far*, the president of, *Jesus Christ you did what and how, and how many times ?*” the inmate said with both bravura and self-critique.

“That is true, forty-six murders are a lot; for a civilian,” MO thought of the murders because everyone thought of the murders; it was the thing the man -the inmate- was most famous for. Isaiah -however- didn’t say a word.

“That is not what I meant. I mean, I was always going too far in everything. Anyway, my point is that I once -more than once- sat down and read a book cover to cover without any interruption and I mean, I read every day -every day I read- but somedays I read like it was the only thing I have to do. And those days I got a feeling that comes over me that is quasi-religious. It’s a heavy thing, a ponderous thing, it’s like jet lag for the soul,” the inmate was trying to figure it out too; as he spoke. He built up sentences quickly -unthinkingly, remorselessly- with words he felt he could tear down if the construction didn’t work or was ugly in some way. He didn’t think these edifices would remain anywhere, not in the heads of his interlocutors nor in the memory of God; nor in the toolbag of the devil.

The inmate was a fool and had no idea what he did with each move and each halt and each time he knelt in the dirt and looked up to the vault. He didn’t take his words as seriously as he should.

“Jet lag, the tired feeling from traveling augmented by the discontinuity of the sun and the attending circadian rhythm, yes. But for the soul,” Isaiah half said; half asked.

“Right, and Isaiah, it makes you different afterwards; you carry a piece of those characters and those worlds with you, reading a book like the Bible can leave goodness in you, and it can leave the stain of Satan as well. A book like Paradise Lost can emboss God on your soul, and it can leave residue of the Student of Revenge too. Books are dangerous man; powerful for good and evil.

“What did you read?” he then asked Isaiah.

“Well, I read two-hundred and five books,” Isaiah wanted him to narrow the search parameters.

“Well, name one,” the inmate said with frustration; he didn’t care which one, *just get on with it*, he thought.

“*Wiseblood*,” Isaiah said; picking one at random.

“Oh, Jesus, Isaiah,” the inmate said with an involuntary movement -of body- back into his chair. The hair on his arms rose in an arc, the skin around the eyes twitched. He held his breath.

“*The church without Christ*,” Isaiah said, extracting out one line -again at random- from that work.

“Man, that book will turn you inside and out; that woman is scarier than *Heilung* playing at a midnight funeral for a teenaged sociopath’s deceased reticulated python,” the inmate said as he shook his head. The scar on the inmate -that fault-lined from brow to jaw- lit up and shadowed like the continental divide as sun and clouds traded places and birds avoided one another in air. The lab’s LEDs moved one-degree on schedule.

“That is an interesting way to phrase it,” MO said from the counter as he flanged up the printer’s side panel. All the most recent data for the 2020 election coming up was sifted by fourteen algorithms and MO chose three of the fourteen that he could use. He did his job as he eavesdropped on Isaiah and the inmate.

“Anyway, that woman is the real deal, I have never been right after reading her. I don’t even want to know what else you read. Look,” the inmate said, “real literature is like a bomb, or a biological weapon. You must be careful with it. It can make you deeper, more substantive, more real. But *real* ain’t synonymous with *good*. Evil is *real* too. And you can misread a book; or an author can mis-write it.”

They sat in a moment of silence as the inmate then added, “study on that.”

III. 2038 e.v.

Jack Three let Jack Four DM him privately, so that the other Jacks would not read or think what was said.

“Can you meet me down on the other side of ravine three?” he asked and Jack Three agreed.

He still had antique whites and craquelure of dried oils on his hands from the fresco he was piling on the container -the north side of the *agogic* garage- and he wiped them on his pants; but they were so dried nothing came off. He -north of the long container- stared at the four labors of

Hercules; the buck slung on shoulder, the perfect circle carved in the undeterred lion, the 12-point rack piecing the skin of one Jack. Jack gazed at the python of five meters wrought up in manifold eights both about and within grasp of one of his brothers in the *tableau* .

He saw Blax -in five whites, four greys, and one shade of black- wear the squid as mask. He saw spider webs buttress colonnade; horse head bleed from the nose; the tree of life shed its leaves for the season.

In the large painting -hidden from all as that side of that container was never seen- Blax groped the branches; he did not fight a beast.

Jack Three had the *nanobots* follow him as he walked up into his room and then out again; they hovered above lighting his way, but not illuminating the whole room so the others could stay asleep. He worked late at night as he painted; and he walked unshod and holding his weight above the waist.

He felt sad and yet the forest would seem lighter tonight, the moon was bright behind clouds and thus diffuse; it gave gauzy shadows to the boughs and brambles. He saw smoke off in his foreground but took no real notice of it. More and more forest fires were burning lately and so he did not measure its composition or suspect its source.

He treated its nimbus like summer's late-afternoon clouds.

He walked with no care for noise or stealth. He just -merely- was eager to see Jack Four; and yet he knew nothing good would come. It would be bad or worse and he'd have to choose between those two. And he already knew how it would go. Jack Three could often see so far ahead it was almost as if he spoiled the surprise of life. He painted larger and larger *tableaux* to get these visions -and thus the world- to freeze; the visions moved far ahead before he could catch his breath or find his feet.

But this is the fate of the artist, he sees far, far ahead, even if he ain't right, he's ahead of what's going to be wrong.

He walked for just over a third of an hour and arrived at the south side of *Mount Wolsefen* ridge and looked down on the ravine Jack Four -dismissively- called *number three* .

He saw the fires of the clans out beyond and he saw the trees bent in a bow; he saw the cathedral Jack had made so many months ago. The trees were

like the hull of a capsized ship, like *Sainte Chappelle* , and the white of the *Birch* and *Aspen* looked purple in the sublunary lumens of the moon. Jack Three saw now -as he walked down hill- that it looked more and more like the bones of Leviathan and no head nor tail; just ribs of an old abandoned whale over turned in the third ravine between *Lot 45* and *Hr íð Tòrr* .

Jack descended, and his joints jammed and his muscles compressed and his tendons tightened and relaxed like shock absorbers and his eyes maintained gyroscopic level and he saw just fine in the low-light.

As he approached the -bent-tree, taut-bough- forest cathedral he saw the black outline and grey form of Jack Four seated in a throne built for himself in the head -the end- of the church. There were no pews. The throne had three elk femurs arranged like the *Hagal* vivisected with the horizon of one broken -but straight- bear bone made of vertebrae fused together like the baffles of a suppressor. Candles lit up the edges and *bots* hovered with blue light to keep the insects at bay.

Jack saw all this through the gap betwixt the tree-ribs.

As he moved the *Aspens* blocked his view of Jack Four in waves like blinking, like winking, like falling asleep and waking up in a start. This shuttering was auto-corrected by his *visual-cortex* ; his mind made Jack both rise and fall in his seat and once he reached the entrance to the feral church he saw Jack as leaning forward in the throne and the red ash of a cigar glowed at center, just right of center, of his black mass at center and seated and still.

“Come on in, brother,” Jack Four said and the smoke from the cigar rose up into the moon light that came down from the leaf-less boughs now in their winter.

“Hey Jack,” Jack Three said with no mirth or joy; but no lack of breath.

“Come on in, have a seat,” Jack Four said and two *nanobots* glowed above a chair made of lumber just to Jack Four’s starboard side. Jack sat and they talked for minutes about the days between them and what had transpired and Jack was honest and Jack was too.

They had no lies between them and thus, spoke none.

“Why me?” Jack Three finally said. He knew, but he wanted to hear it here under the bam, under the boo. He recalled the time with Blax, he recalled the *Pequod* tattoo he had carved in him, the vision he had, the tryptic, the vision of religious war. He recalled the speech he gave to his brothers and had they had all heard it like the rim feels the vibration of the hub, *via* the spokes.

“You’re the most creative of all. You can see the future. You can see what is needed. But, Jack,” Jack Four said and they both knew he meant Jack One, “will never submit to anything, no matter if it’s right. Capital *r* right. He’s just not built for the big picture. He’s all balls and all *now* ; all right now.”

“And Jack?” Jack Three asked of Jack Two.

“He’s in love with life, man,” Jack Four laughed as if to say he both understood *and* couldn’t abide.

“Yeah,” Jack Three knew what Jack Four meant. He and Jack Four, had something about the brow that didn’t think death was so bad, and that tragedy might be so innate that there was no escape. To fight it as Jack One could, to lament it as Jack Two would was not the *tao* of Jack Three.

And Jack Four saw even further ahead; to a place without dread or lament.

“And frankly, only you get that my role is the worst. I may live longer but not better. You all get to go out as heroes, as martyrs. I’ll be the villain. And nobody will understand. Nobody,” Jack Four said and the ash went from red to orange and then grey.

“So, what should I tell them?” Jack Three asked him.

“That I said that blood is thicker than water,” Jack Four said with a grin that said something so softly, so honestly, and yet was so meant to deceive. It - like how many things?- was inverted, backwards, and thus one could say it with one meaning, and have it be taken as opposite. All the while one never -technically- lied.

Jack could be honest and still perfectly deceive.

Jack Three saw the future, Jack Four was right about that. *In some ways Jack Four was the true artist* , Jack Three thought as he looked at his own painted hands. He could see it incoming from a million meters and minutes

away. *No way could they all survive this; no way, Jack Three thought as he thought of evolution and the way it worked, no way could they all survive this coming moment in time. The wave must collapse, and eventually they'd have to admit they were all one thing, and only one of them would move forward in time.*

And only a man with no vision would close his eyes to what he could already see.

4. The Blood of the Covenant

No loud and noisy conversation from sunrise ‘til dark to avoid scaring the whales. If white water sing out, *there she white water* , if spout, *there she blows*, if flukes sing out, *there goes flukes* ... always sing out at the top of your voices. There is music in it Leviathan [Dolin, Eric J]

And the woman fled into the wilderness, where she hath a place prepared of God, that they should feed her there a thousand, two hundred, and three score days Revelation XII: XII [King James Bible]

We do know that at some point in our history, a few enterprising cells decided that they would be better off joining forces rather than continuing to go it alone. These cells merged into the first multicellular organisms. As these organisms grew larger and more formally organized the colonies grew more selective, even xenophobic. Outsiders were no longer tolerated. Like survivors crowding onto a full lifeboat, intruder cells could swamp the whole colony and had to be kept out of it or -if the they couldn’t take the hint- killed outright. Chauvinism is literally in our blood Why We Hurt [Vertosick, Frank T. MD]

I. 2032 e.v.

“No, we use the HEK-293 cells still; they work best for homologous recombination,” MO said and kept populating the report with the data stream; sifting ingots from dross.

“Oh, ok, well, we have all these other cells if you want,” Tania said to MO. MO had learned Chinese long ago, but he allowed the Chinese translation of the word *privacy* to appear on his interface:

Pri ·va ·cy (noun) /privəsē/

The western love of loneliness “Just leave them in long-term storage,” Isaiah said, diverting Tania’s words from MO so that MO could work in peace. Isaiah saw the naval and coastal history of China appear next in

the .09 seconds it took Tania to hear and respond to his words. The text - in context with his exploration of the current Chinese state- appeared, was processed and filed at once: China had over two hundred ships in the 15th century, with vessels larger and more numerous than all of the west combined. In 1421 a lightning strike hits the Forbidden City's palace and destroyed half of everything that grew up more than a meter above ground. The Confucian maxim -The Mandate of Heaven- made the Yongle ruler take this strike and fire as judgement that they had gone astray. His son dismantled all two hundred ships and closed the door for national reflection.

This happened just as Europe was beginning its sailing west -in 1492- to escape the Anaximander river.

“Chinese harmony, is based on naïve thinking, that one's neighbors are benevolent, that emperors are not greedy. Our Naiveté had been ruthlessly exploited by the Europeans,” Cantonese historian Xi Zanglo said.

Trading was banned, all transactions were declared piracy, all coastal peoples were moved inland. Emperor Yóngyǎn, said there was no need to import outside products from barbarians to his people, his letter to King George III expressed thanks but no thanks for their so-called gifts.

“Ok,” Tania said and went back to the door thinking of just this one thing: the cells of HEK-239 and her own only tangentially now. China and its philosophy were as remote as a snow storm a hundred years before or ninety-nine years from now.

“Hey, Tania,” Isaiah added as she turned to face him, her eyes down slightly, “good work on that phase four protocol last week. We just saw the returns on their affect, and man, you must have really reached them. I mean, their whole metabolism was changed, their cortisol levels were way down, their bio-metrics were ideal; like, ideal,” he emphasized the word *ideal* .

She felt a smile creep up on her face almost unbidden, as if she were watching it happen to her. She was shocked at Isaiah's laudatory remarks and began wondering if she -herself- had even read the report or looked at the boy's data from last week. She was almost dubious he was serious now, as she doubted herself and wondered if maybe he was being facetious, and

her smile stopped growing -stalled out- as she tried to gauge his motives from his mien. She gazed up and saw a serious but warm face, he was not obviously bitter or sarcastic at all.

“I mean it,” he said imploringly as he if knew -well, *he did know* , she guessed- her feelings and thoughts.

“Well, thanks,” she said and turned to leave.

“Hey, can you walk me through what you think you did?” Isaiah asked.

“I guess I can, yes, *uh* ,” she moved in an awkward way back and forth between the door and him; the vials of cells in her hands. Isaiah caught her dilemma and told her to drop the cells off in the next room and come back so they could chat.

She smiled again and felt buoyed, and grateful and warm towards him. She liked how the tension seemed to lift from her belly and face. The lab usually made her nervous but today -now- she felt relaxed.

Isaiah then -as she walked away- received the data from the Mexican operation; and he saw a 73.5% failure rate. He began looking into the details of what exactly went wrong. He had to repress a bit of frustration - which manifested in him too quickly scanning the data for errors instead of taking it in as a whole, rationally and gestalt- and so he issued two doses of *lorazepam* and a reduction -by 12.5%- in his *glucocorticoids* .

He had to outline it for himself, scaffold it and then deconstruct it.

First, he had infected 2,408 foreign nationals with the parasite. It had had the intended epidemiological effect; they all had urges to return home - south of the *Rio Grande* - and all but fourteen had made it home before expiring. There were three car accidents killing twelve of them and two committed suicide after the urges began; he recorded these as anomalous. Isaiah assumed that the two suicides knew their return home would be met with opprobrium by the cartel and thus those two had decided they could neither fight the urge nor yield to it.

Some men were so conflict-adverse they preferred suicide to a *contretemps* with the world.

Once back home they died -2,378 of them- within seventy-two hours. It would appear -to a cursory medical examination- that they died from dehydration due to influenza. Their deaths would not cause alarm.

The cartel had disposed of the bodies and moved new dealers into Colorado within four days. Isaiah counted 1,922 on day-five and 3,419 by end of the seven day week; spread out in Grand Junction, Trinidad and Fort Collins; at the edges and in each city in between. They avoided Denver for now it seemed.

They had increased their presence not diminished it , he surmised with attending pique.

The inmate, Isaiah then thought, *was scheduled to arrive today at 1000hrs, after his dental appointment in town.* Isaiah thought of him in the chair with four armed-guards around him and the dentist more nervous -for once- than the patient. It made Isaiah smile and thus his own dark teeth were - somewhat asymmetrically- revealed.

Isaiah wanted to see if the inmate had any ideas. Often times the man thought in ways that were not intuitive to Isaiah and so, just in talking, solutions often appeared; like gifts from the lower layers of the central nervous system; interpretations of dreams or songs; like faces -or animals- seen in clouds.

He went over all the specific epidemiological data, the transfer routes, the logistics of the re-insertion and the forensics of the Mexican investigations but he felt it was like white noise at this point. The data offered nothing but more data. It deconstructed what he wanted built back up; and he stopped the algorithms as they sorted the 1.8 billion pieces of information; he cleared his mind of all thoughts. *Just an image of a forest with light -in discreet beams- descending through autumnal leaves still clinging to boughs as the floor was tessellated with yellow, orange and red leaves that had already fallen* , he thought as his mind was populated with right hemispheric images in lieu of integers now.

He stared at this image in his mind and breathed. The music of birds began as soft overture and distributed itself randomly; more silence than song. He -with right hand- held his ball-chain and tags as the weight of his hands pulled on his neck.

Tania came back into the room and they each sat and spoke -he never once losing this image from his mind- as his left hemisphere made contact with hers and her reports on the boys' educational protocols and results.

"We read from two novels," she said, as he nodded, "and I let each boy ask a question to the class. This put some pressure on them to ask interesting questions. I denied them access to any contemporary criticism or popular discussion. I wanted them as blank slates; as much as possible uninfluenced by other people's notions of what was important of the books."

"Excellent," Isaiah encouragingly said to her. "You can introduce that stuff after, but -as you intuited- if you introduce it first it distorts their ability to think for themselves." *He was as prodigal son returning home*, he thought with a small smile. He released more oxytocin in the air around he and she. They both breathed it in.

He noticed his own neck ached just slightly.

"So, with *On a Pale Horse*, Jack Metfield asked if Satan's speech to Zane - the part wherein he says that in Hell, they are quote *tough but fair* - is to be taken as sincere or cynical by the book's author or the character," she said.

"Ah, and what was the result?" Isaiah asked, intrigued by this question; the book itself -the author- had seemed to take a position, but Jack must have been either unsure or he was contradicting the author's intent on purpose; to be a bit mischievous. Either way, Isaiah liked it.

"Well, Jack Oneste said that he felt Satan was justifying his need for souls to claim, that it was cynical and that he -that Satan himself- was the one that could not be reformed. And Jack Thorsen mentioned that in Hell all corrosives were salutary," she said.

"Quoting Blake," Isaiah said and nodded his head slowly.

"I wondered about that, it seemed a very odd thing for a boy of twelve to say," she said and went on, "so he -Jack Thorsen- then decided -said he had decided- that it was likely that in time, God's love would act as an aqua," she paused trying to retrieve the word the boy had used.

"*Aqua regia*," Isaiah said.

“Yeah, and I had to look that up; but- oh, well I guess you know,” she paused.

“Go on,” Isaiah said.

“Well, as you know it is a chemical solution that dissolves noble metals, and so he -Jack- was saying that love is such a thing and can melt Satan’s heart and the heart of all sinners eventually,” she said.

“Romantic,” Isaiah said with approval.

“Yeah, he’s a sweet boy. A bit *naïve* , but so sweet,” Tania said, hiding her slight crush on such a young child.

“And Jack Allbesh?” Isaiah asked of the last boy.

“Well, he said,” she checked her tablet with the notes, “he said that he thought Satan was sincere but in a way that man cannot *appreciate* , he, Jack said. He went on to say that man, mankind, is in need of reform, and that it may in fact take eternity. He said that Satan was not lying, or cynical, just being accurate and this is something man -both in the story and the reader- cannot accept. He said that the reader demands that man be let off the hook eventually, that the reader thinks the *right* -the moral- answer is that an eternity in Hell is unjust.

“But, Jack -Jack Allbesh- said that this fails to see that eternity cannot end, and so it is not unjust as long as it is infinite, and thus more work is yet to be done. I’m quoting him directly now. Jack says quote, *man cannot comprehend that he may in fact need instruction from the devil, that he -mankind- is so corrupt as to be subject to the censure of Satan himself* , unquote,” Tania said and placed the tablet on the chair beside her. She said as much as she knew but she hid that these boys made her nervous.

“*People who refuse to reform in life are hard to reform in death* ,” Isaiah said, quoting Satan from the book itself. He let the history -of European treasuries and Chinese sovereignty- scroll down: After trade was relaxed again following the death of the emperor, the British East India Company -after being advised by the crown to not use silver reserves to pay the Chinese- begins to import as well as export. A full third of all the silver in the world -none of which was mined in China- had ended up in Chinese coffers and the European powers were nervous.

Silver was the only way to pay mercenaries, and thus the only manner in which to defend the nations of the west. Without silver, Britain felt not poor, but vulnerable to attack. And silver had been the only cargo in the hold of British ships going to pick up tea and silk and porcelain from China for the colonies and the European main. China was a seller not a buyer at all. Even the cotton they had once bought from the British was now made in Canton. The European rulers became more and more anxious they'd not be able to defend themselves from attack over time.

Taxes paid in talents of silver, sufficed to pay to raise armies in -and over- time. With horologes and pendulum Europe thought of time. Silver allowed the compression -and manipulation- of time. Pay now -in hard and fungible currency- for war now, by borrowing from the future was the emerging European way.

The Chinese had no such concept, for they had not time to traverse but space. They had loyal subjects -not mercenaries- who saw the nation as above the family, the family above the individual, the individual above the heart. China had space and fealty to the larger corporeal body; a giant dragon that never died and had no ambivalence at all.

Europe was becoming more and more individualistic -the Magna Carta now granting individual rights- and each western nation was itself not at all like the unified beast of Chinese -mínzú guójia- but a bunch of cells in a body, any one of which could rebel. The English especially understood as the Scots -in 1688, 1715, 1719 and again in 1745- attempting to restore King James II -of England- and thus King James VII -of Scotland- and -like the weather on isle itself- refused to settle down.

Bribes had to be paid to defend it, these intransigent outlaws and Jacobites had to be killed or sent far away. And there was no space, and very little time. The ships carried outlaws and silver, and the head of the English kingdom was more than annoyed.

Thus, the crown rightly saw this deficit as a national security issue and the mercantile mind saw a way to continue the tea and silk trade. Each module of the ruling brain of England converged on one idea: they

developed a way to make money on both ends of the deal and avoid shipping silver to the east.

Interests converged for the crown & church and the merchants & seafarers of the west and they introduced a new product to trade; and -in fact- force onto the Chinese: Opium.

II. 2036 e.v.

“Ok, Jack Ma is a renaissance man of sorts and he has a thousand things going on so, we have to accomplish three things,” Isaiah said to Blax via video DM.

Blax watched the screen in his head and smoked his cigar; his arms folded atop his chest; smoke around like weather.

“First, Ma already had a desire for *Bordeaux* , he’s primed. Second, he is having surgery in seventy-eight hours in Hong Kong for a CRISPR procedure to knock out his hypo-glycemia. Apparently, his blood sugar issues are wrecking his ability to drink wine. And lastly, he must be sequestered for seventy hours after the procedure, and during that time he must be prevented from being re-introduced to anything else beyond our target stimuli,” Isaiah said.

“Wine?” Blax asked with incredulity.

“Not just wine Blax; buying every last drop of *Bordeaux* available.”

“Well, he can’t have mine,” Blax said with a smile as he turned towards his 3-magnum case of *Château Lafite* and *Château Mouton* and his eyes -like cameras for Isaiah- revealed the 2015 vintage OWC sitting in his under-counter cooler.

“*Touché* , weirdo. I meant the cases you’ve already jacked,” Isaiah made a small joke and was proud of it.

“*Touché* to you sir, very clever. Now, how are we going to broach the sale considering, assuming, this procedure works? Am I staying in HK or are you doing it electronically or,” Blax puffed his *Petit Tubois* and waited. He stared at the concrete floor; his boots, his knee.

“First things first, let’s get you out to Hong Kong and get that vector delivered and get the Jacks in place to secure the facility itself. I’m going to figure out a way to keep him under house arrest -so to speak- for the time we need,” Isaiah said and let a lab-wasp crawl on his leg. He had saw it land 48-seconds ago and had ignored it until now its wings began to move slowly as it tread.

“Figure it out?” Blax said it with concern.

“That was a euphemism; no, a -almost- a lie. I was pretending I had not already solved for X, and I don’t know why, forgive me. Frankly, I’ve already figured it out,” Isaiah reassured.

“No, problem, so you have the Jack Ma thing handled; except the vector introduction and setting a perimeter? You need me inside the facility after vector intro?” Blax asked.

“No, I’m going to put him under for the seventy hours. His doctors won’t understand, but they will be too scared to blab. So, I can do a conference call with them from here and put them at ease. You just need to get the vector in the same room. And the Jacks need to keep that hospital secure; no last-minute nonsense from the authorities or Ma’s security people. All that needs handled, I can handle the doctors and the environmental cues in that environment if you can handle everything outside of that building.

“Roger that,” Blax said and blew a big column in front of his own face as it would be seen from both sides by Isaiah. This smoke plume mushroomed as it hit the cold dense air and peeled back toward the man.

Isaiah was not sure if he trusted Blax or not; he felt at first blush that he did. Isaiah concluded that he would have to study on it more; it -this trust, fealty- might be influencing his behavior and *pre-motor* thought. He let his new *intero-bots* run more tests.

“*Res Ipsa Loquitur* ,” Isaiah said aloud in regard to the smoke not the question Blax had forced him to ponder, as the room then fell silent for a second as MO’s breathing could be heard.

Blax heard many things echo and tried to locate the source. But he gave up as his PGC began giving him so much information he belayed the order and felt so tired he debated sleeping right there in his clothes and at his chair.

He rose, removed his pants -not his shirt- and crawled atop of the blankets and was so quickly asleep that the dream seemed a week away: "What are you lying about?" he asked.

"What are we lying about?" he asked back.

"Yeah, ok," he said.

"We are lying about what we wanted."

"You're being coy and it is not our way."

"I want to go slow because it is worth it to go slow sometimes."

"Well, then go slow but don't make me ask questions."

"Fair enough," Lyndon said, "when did you notice we shared dreams?"

"I don't know, sometime around 2025 maybe." Blax answered.

"Yeah, ok. I noticed it later. And so I had Isaiah build for me my friend Todd."

"Todd Gleim?"

"Yes. And I did that for two reasons; the first is obvious. But the second was I wanted to see how he worked. How a clone actually worked and so in 2030 I had him build Todd for me and I watched him and discovered he not only had almost all his old memories but that our shared memories were available to me when I dreamed."

"You had his dreams?"

"Yes, and I knew why. Isaiah built him from my memories of him; not just his genome, which he got from his burial site, his grave. But his personality was also built from my memories, engrams of our times together.

"You must have noticed we have excellent memories," Lyndon asked.

"Well, vivid, detailed. But I don't know how accurate they are," Blax said; always hedging.

"Yeah, well, nobody does. Not even Isaiah. And so he just makes it real. He takes my memories of Todd or anyone I knew and builds their personality from that; in addition to their own genome of course. It must have valence with who they really are."

“How close?” Blax asked.

“I’ve heard around 20%. No less or the clone won’t accept it. Too far out of boundary.”

“Is this how the Jacks were made, from my memories of myself?” Blax asked and Lyndon was surprised Blax still didn’t know who he was.

The atomic clocks reached 0600hrs and Blax felt he awoke to the sound of the Bust breathing and their child between them with its hands above just like Valance herself used to sleep. As if falling. Blax felt like smiling but the recall of the dream -the other man’s dream- intruded and each word now seemed written on a mirror so it may be read forward and backward but not aloud.

“I read some of it earlier,” he said. This time the room was light grey, and the light came from the south.

“Aloud?”

“No. Silently in my head.”

“Good. Keep it there. But do not ever say it aloud.”

“Why?” Blax asked.

“Because if you do then it will be retrievable because it will be a conscious memory at that point.” Lyndon said with some angst.

“But it was never my memory. It was always yours. You came up with it before I was alive. And if they didn’t know about it then it can’t be in me. They would have had to have it to put it in me.”

“That is true, but I don’t know how long we’ve been sharing dreams, so I don’t know how much I’ve told you here,” Lyndon said.

“Well, I can’t recall it. I can only read it and it’s like reading a sentence on a mirror, forwards and backwards.”

“Why not give up. Just stop even trying.”

“Yeah, you ever try that, smart guy?” Blax said and Lyndon smiled which quickly turned into a soft snort through the nose.

“Touché.”

“Why hide it from him, from them? Why?”

“Because if they know it then I’ll know it,” Lyndon said.

“But you already know it,” Blax said.

“Not forever I won’t.”

“What?”

“You ever plan on dying?” Lyndon asked.

“Why care what you know or don’t know when you’re dead?” Blax asked.

“You think death is real? Fucking life ain’t even real,” Lyndon said.

His atomic clock hit 0000hrs and he felt his eyes opened to a black that was pixelated and depthless and he lay still and tried to reconstruct the dream. He saw -recalled from the dream- Blax staring into a mirror and a face -16% more handsome than his own- appear with eyes going grey in the moonlight. He saw just her feet in the bed, and the babe on its side, each limb truncated by the mirror and the wall.

Langan’s CTMU paper lay on the floor with rings of coffee stains making a Venn diagram of the words *recursion* and *supertautology* and *self*.

“How come we can meet in the dreams now?” he asked.

“I don’t know.”

“I just had yours for years, we never met.”

“I just had yours,” Lyndon said.

“But some time ago we meet in the dreams. Why? And when?”

“I don’t know. To me it’s 2020, what year is it to you?”

“2040,” Blax said.

“I have no memory of my life between now and 2040, so you’ve lived your own life for twenty years.”

“I don’t think that’s what happened at all,” Blax said.

“Well, I have no recall.”

“Why would they even want your memory if you don’t want to give it up? What possible use is it? And if I don’t have it, you would have had it between however long you’ve been wherever you are now and when I was born.”

“When were your born?” Lyndon asked.

“1974, same as you,” Blax said but realized that made no sense at all.

“See?” Lyndon said as he felt Blax’s confusion at the contradiction. “You don’t know how crazy what you believe is until you say it aloud. Shit, you don’t even know what you think until you say it aloud. That’s what gave me the idea. I think you know what I did that I cannot recall now, and I think -shit, I know- that I don’t *want* to know it. So, your job is to keep it secret from them so they can’t tell it to me.”

“Well, I don’t know what it is. So, that should be easy.”

“Yeah, but what if you figure it out?” Lyndon asked. “You know, figure it out when one of us says it aloud.”

“Will they know it? Then they’ll know it?” Blax asked.

“They know everything you know. As soon as you know it they will too.”

The clock had advanced to 0601hrs and Blax had not been dreaming but not awakened either, and the flame from the candle from last night still burned down in the hot wax of the jar, most of the light sank into the liquid and the glow seemed like it floated from a lightning bug hovering in a circle far way.

And he knew right then that he knew -in an inarticulate, non-language, right hemisphere way- he knew what he’d done; even though he had never actually done it; the man in the dreams had done it. He saw himself send the email to PraXis in 2017 and he shut his eyes in the dark hoping the header and body of the email would be occluded now that he had sheltered his eyes. But the memory grew brighter in the dark of these squeezes and so he opened his eyes wide and stared at the light on the kitchen and rose immediately to keep the memory away. He flooded his mind with stimuli to banish the inchoate thought of his right hemisphere.

He knew he'd need to hear it, *via the audio-cortex* or- he stopped thinking as the foxed page appeared in the head. Page 228 of the 15th edition of *Consciousness Explained* read out in his mind silently -in text- not speech: *...this virtual machine, this software of the brain, performs a sort of internal political miracle: it creates a virtual captain of the crew, without elevating any one of them to long-term dictatorial power. Who's in charge? First one coalition then another, shifting in ways that are not chaotic thanks to good meta-habits that tend to entrain coherent, purposeful sequence rather than an interminable helter-skelter power grab...*

One of the chief tasks of the imaginary boss is controlling communication with the outside world. As we saw in chapter 4, the idealization that makes heterophenomenology possible assumes that there is someone home doing the talking, an Author of Record, a Meaner of all the meanings. When we go to interpret a loquacious body's vocal sounds, we don't suppose they are just random yawps, or words drawn out of a hat... but the acts of a single agent, the one and only person whose body is making the sounds.

Blax, immediately powered down his PGC and held his breath as it cascaded and his mind cleared of all but temperature sensation and the vague feeling of fear.

Death was not only real, Blax thought disconnected from the cloud, and Isaiah's panoptic eye, it was the only way to protect himself now . Jack would not come this month, this was his last month alive.

Now, at 0559hrs Blax awoke for real; into this world nearly four years behind the dream. Pages of a book that had fallen from the shelf rattled as the air blew hardest along the floor.

III. 1998 e.v.

Arol walked the grounds in *meditance* ; she focused her thoughts on her designs.

She had been singing with the new band for a few months now and felt that something emergent was appearing like a formation of thunderheads. She

was proud of her bandmates and felt they were beginning to give her the sonic substratum she needed to lift herself off the plane she had been on for sometime now; *plateauing artistically*, she felt.

She passed taut Zendik men -and sloppily clothed females on her flanks- as she wandered out to the edge of the 118-acres of their Florida inland farm and orange grove. She floated inside the growl of chainsaws off her leese; the dust in this summer heat blew in spurts that assaulted the skin in an inoffensive manner; like the punch of a child.

The goat barn was swarmed with girls, like drones, haploid-diploid sisters all working for the queen who was inside with the female goats -up in stalls two at a time being milked- and growing fat from the milk and honey that this efficient and working farm provided the inner-circle of Zendik Farm in 1998 of the *era vulgari* .

Their queen was now Fawn -Arol and Wulf's daughter- a weathered but noble looking girl of twenty-three who had one child named *Timkin* -going by the *sobriquet* of *Ursus* ; the father was Zoe.

Lyndon cleaned a bearing with a red rag soaked in solvent and stood in the shadow of the work shop and scanned his twelve; then his three and his six in a *nonchalant* manner; always doing recon as if his head was merely a vane spun by the outside wind and not the weather of his own inner paranoia.

He watched Arol for a few seconds to track her vector; glad to see she would pass in front of him and then travel to his 11 o'clock and passed the shop -and disappear behind the building- on her walk. She was muttering to herself and not at all interested in him, which he always took as a sign that the gods favored him. Arol, the queen *emeritus* as she was -a queen in transition- was dangerous he felt; and she had no use for him other than his ability to fix machines and make money on selling trips. But she didn't like his attitude and had said so more than once.

She was honest when honesty required an insult. He would admire -and emulate- that for decades to come.

He wiped the bearing's race clockwise and let his eyes slide to starboard allowing those *ojos* to pull his head around as if tethered to them like a may

pole. The goat barn was to his leeward and he watched the young girls swarm in and out of the ramshackle edifice with the swarms of wasps. Their similar clothing and body types gave off a uniformity he found soothing. He like things others would find lamentable or irrelevant. He saw beauty in between the things others enjoyed; he was an aesthetic gleaner. *He picked up what others left behind. He, he thought, liked what most threw away or found unattractive. Where others wanted shiny chrome and homo-reds he wanted murdered-out blacks and ghost fucking greys. He liked the cold, the fog, the rain.*

The shadow he stood in was shrinking as the sun rose.

He moved back into its smaller triangle; his skin was sensitive to light. He had lost five pounds since his arrival four months ago, but he felt good and since the females found him attractive he relaxed into his thinner body.

He still had no idea who he was. He used females as a mirror; what they reflected back was what he saw.

Most new Zendiks had to change their clothing to fit in; but he already dressed in military-style garb; so his only modification was to ditch his black t-shirts with cryptic and aggro-photos & words on them; things that were vaguely sinister and violent which were seen as ugly on the farm. Zendik was officially not opposed to the mainstream in its aesthetics; overt and oppositional semiotics were not sanctioned. One dressed and spoke and sang as if the war was already won. One did not oppose what was already gone.

Ugly was decreed by the aesthetics administrators; judgements were made while he slept.

He actually agreed with the concept of making everyone share an aesthetic; too much emphasis was placed on ersatz individuality in the world out there, what the Zendik's called, the DeathKulture. *People could wear whatever they wanted in the DK but they chose to wear terrible, corporate, square shit*, that was the consensus on the Farm; Verdy had said that to him and Lyndon had agreed.

He'd never not agree with the idea that freedom was taken not given, and that most never avail themselves of anything given for free.

The martial aspect of the place was his favorite part; it was the part most difficult for the hippies and softies that often arrived there with liberal idealism ill-suited for the hardcore righteousness of Zendik Farm. Most people left within a week or two. Few stayed more than a month, and once that threshold was passed -following the law of investment- most stayed years. Nicole would upbraid him for braying to civilians -when they went back to Cincinnati- of how martial Zendik was; she thought he was a terrible salesman.

He used words like 'boot-camp' and 'hardcore' which she thought was wrong. She wanted him to speak of some inner and perpetual peace. But his language never found such words.

The first few months were the hardest; this was felt by most. Not unlike kicking an addiction or a love-loss, Zendik's detox was so radical and harsh that once you survived it you wanted to stay as long as possible to make the hardship you had endured worth the price. *Sunk costs*, he thought one time. Nari had once told him that; she had said that dues paid in the hard times would be wasted if one left when shit got rough.

There were no drugs or booze or cigarettes -or even sugar or caffeine- on the farm; it was a *Siddhartha* -like experience which Lyndon didn't mind, as he was a bit of a tee-toler, at any rate. Caffeine felt like cocaine to him anyway. And he didn't like cocaine at all. It made him breathe shallow and afraid to speak.

The Florida farm had an ancillary beach house up the A1A into Fort Pierce. It was a rundown mansion worth millions -or at least one million- once fixed up; but the Zendiks had gotten it for \$200,000 and it was all alone on a nature preserve right on the beach. As always, the swarms of Zendik men began every construction project on it and the girls painted it and cleaned. The gender roles followed natural law and it worked as well as anything there ever did.

He often worked until his eyes saw hexagrams and strange ambers; he paused and listened to the waves hit the sand; waiting for white-cloud shadows to darken the land.

Lyndon had begun his first weeks at this beach house fixing up the guest quarters -a small ancillary building- to the north of the beach house itself.

They re-tiled and fixed the electrical outlets and cleaned out the ballast from the previous owners. He and Qual slept in a small room in bunks and they talked all night of the sane and the insane of the world and themselves.

The white noise of the ocean washed over his ears as they worked. No music was allowed -per Zendik regulations- as mere background noise; it was a rule he was glad for. He began a strange love affair with their draconian demands and for an avowed anarchist he found himself wearing these corset-like rules with a monkish pride. He too had contempt for the civilian bodies and minds and ideas of the great mass of first-world mankind. He had come to Zendik for its ferocity, not its *save-the-world* bumper-sticker philosophy, that do-gooder shit that attracted most of the interlopers and long-termers alike. He had the heart of a fascist and the soul of an idealist.

He wanted everyone happy, *or else* .

He walked inside the metal shop and dunked the bearing into the solvent bin and turned to watch as Zoe welded some square stock he'd placed in a jig across the far-end of the shop. Lyndon turned -to protect his eyes- as the MiG arced and he moved the bearing around in the solvent like a dolphin or shark at surface wrestling or wrangling some prey; he then picked it up and began wiping it counter clockwise with the rag. He stepped into the door's shadow once more and watched the wasp-girls around the goat barn again; these girls seemed strange to him, almost soulless but not without purpose. He wondered if maybe the soul of a Zendik had to disappear for awhile before it could manifest like the older women seemed to have.

Arol certainly had a soul, he could feel it on the outside of her like armature; like imbricate scales of the winged dragon that she was. He thought it and meant it as no insult at all.

He smiled as he thought of her this way; and he even felt she wouldn't mind the comparison. She was a former beauty who had not fought the senescence of age like most vain women. She had transitioned into a fierce soldier in her second life; the life past her young beauty; the only available -fungible- beauty for women in the *DeathKulture* , they had said. But at Zendik, an aging woman could become what she had always been born to be: a warrior.

Of course, nature made the rules; man just wrote them down, and the Zendik penchant for breaking natural law was looked at by the earth and her evolutionary operating system like the transgressions of little children , Lyndon thought. He knew that an older woman could be beautiful but not sexy; only youthful women had value to the evolutionary parts of a man. The rules are the rules. Break them at your peril , he thought. Any utopian vision that contradicts natural law is in for quite a rebuke from the gods, he thought.

Nika walked across his visual path to his starboard side carrying a five-gallon bucket of warm goat's milk, she struggled -but with dignity- with its weight. He watched her- and her background- as he cleaned his bearing methodically.

Nika and him had never gotten along. And he had not learned enough to see this as something he should be proud of yet. So, he attempted to ingratiate himself with her. She was one of these proto-feminist types who lived in some DMZ between hating men and adopting the Zendik creed that no such feminist bullshit would be allowed. Men were to be respected and revered at Zendik, and this was Arol's dictum more than Wulf's. And like all Zendik's rules, people tried but failed to obey them. People are what they are, and Lyndon was a fascist, *and Nika was a feminist* , he thought; and deep down, they were both out for blood.

Arol was anti-feminist because she saw man-hatred as knee-jerk and petulant; the act of a puerile girl who was throwing a tantrum, not the creed of a full woman who could love herself and men all at once. In fact, Arol insisted that unless a woman loved men -loved them for exactly what they were- then that woman could never be a woman. So, Nika had to tamp down her hatred of men by being mean to new guys like Lyndon; while showing deference to the older Zendik men. It was a sublimation; and one she would get away with for many years.

It was exactly the kind of shit everyone did.

In her defense, Lyndon -and most new guys- were dipshits and squares and their bad philosophies were genuinely unattractive to sophomore females at the farm; Nika had been there a few years and was in that middle-earth period where one was more self-righteous and adamant than either the

novices or the long-timers who had been there twenty-plus years. The Zendiks that had been there a year or two were the most tendentious. The uninitiated hadn't even understood -much less accepted- the philosophy of Wulf and the old timers had softened their affect and abandoned the need for probative fealty displays. For a while -until Zendik's entropy accelerated between 2007 and 2012- the old-timers' allegiances were taken for granted, so they could ease up on the self-righteous bullshit that Nika and other people in for two to five years still exhibited.

As he watched and held rag and bearing; she didn't look up at Lyndon. Her head was bowed slightly as cantilever to the weight of the milk bucket, her loose purple shirt -with the neck cut out so massively her breasts and their freckles showed like moons behind opening clouds- billowed and wrinkled like waves. He cleaned the bearing more thoroughly with his hands and took her measure with his hooded eyes.

Her black hair was long, and her face was relaxed like a woman with purpose and freedom inside a structure -a safe zone- will have. She wore no makeup; any such paint would have seemed out of place. Like thick coats of it on the goat barn itself, any color would have hidden the entropic beauty of the boards, their fissures and gaps, *their* *mojocido nunca duerme*, he thought.

It was the patina of decay to which he felt so drawn. He didn't know if he wanted to push back or pull down; but he liked the middle zone.

They lived in a kind of post-apocalyptic luxury, he thought. They ate well, their home was beautiful; and lovely men and women swarmed like those other eusocial species of bees and wasps did. He felt a consilience -a harmony- at work that created a true beauty that the garish gold laden and gilded lilies of *Mar-a-Lago* -just down the street- would never achieve. They -his Zendiks- were an orderly and labor-divided mud-wasp hive and the rich and fetid -and overly *feted* - corpses of the DeathKulture's regents and magistrates were bleak drones milling about black boxes wherein it was unknown how they managed to churn out the corrupted natural resources they feathered their nests with.

He hated society in every way society manifested; and this never abated; he merely found new and interesting things to despise in his country, his fellow

man, and civilization itself. Society would zig, he'd zag, but his contempt they'd always have.

He was proud of every part of this place. It had layers of meaning and beauty and purpose like layers of the ancient earth once single-cell oceans, then mammalian plains; once molten lava, then fecund rainforests of island paradises; once mountains razed; once meeting tectonic plates raised to continental divides and all layered up and down the axis-of-time and *Gaian* depth of prokaryotic fossils and pre-Cambrian reptiles and the bones of beasts as big as whales and as fast as cats and as smart as ravens, the corvid class of beasts; and manifold chaos of the air.

Zendik would never have the *imprimatur* of Yale or the French Legionnaires, *but it deserved such laurels and respect*, he thought. His brother, Travis, would look down upon it like everything Lyndon was about; and all that he did. *Travis was a square* - Lyndon thought with more hurt than malice yet- *flat with no jagged edges, no soul inside; no depth* . *He only cared about what the television said; what the boss announced was right; what the teacher demanded after class; what the cops pointed at. He had no part of the brain to think for himself and thus he missed all the beauty not in a brochure or on a map handed out by the forestry service. He saw intelligence only in things with PhD as suffix or Dr as prefix; he saw justice in only the written down law.*

Why, Lyndon thought, *did he even care what his brother thought?* His brother, *was the worst of the worst, the exact type of dork he could have easily ignored* . Except that Travis was kin and Lyndon was old-school and felt that family ought to be protected even from his own wrath; even when his anger was justified, *as his kin* , he thought, *was so contemptuous of him* . It was a conflict he would not resolve in his mind for twenty years, and until then he tried to impress his family -his brother most of all- with daring and artistry and *élan vital*. But nothing would ever impress them. And the gods were embarrassed to watch Lyndon even try.

His brother would only say of Zendik: *whatever you wanna do, I guess*, with a confusion and pique of a dog who's been shown an ornate card trick when it was expecting a simple pat on the head or a treat from the hand.

Zendik's dusty poverty, Lyndon thought, would make his family recoil, but he felt rich and like a voluptuarian inside the warm embrace of this tribal structure. He felt at home and felt the wealth that ancient peoples held in reserve and spent as well. They lacked nothing, wanted for nothing, because they had nearly fifty comrades all pitching in to face the prow into the waves, his mates at the till and windlass preventing a beam-sea, making sure no pirates boarded, avoiding the lee shore, the rocks and sirens too.

They spoke openly, vulnerably and with *meaning* to one another; no one hid inside their minds. These outlaws were not closed-up cowards with no emotions pretending to be *ok* when one was not. *These Zendiks, he thought, were alive among the dead of the larger world; this Empire of Nothing that had a billion slaves happy for their condition of servitude.*

The popping of the MiG welder stopped; the *coup de foudre* -and shadows snapping in quick succession from the arc- stopped too. This absence of electric and photon action gave pause to his running-blue and arc-thoughts.

He walked back into the shop and placed the bearing in the solvent tank again.

He turned to Zoe who lifted his welding hood and looked at Lyndon from five meters and smiled. It, that smile, on his blue tattooed face, a face white and red in borders around lips and eyes, his blond hair long and jailed in a tail, all of it invited him over to look, and Lyndon did just that. Lyndon had no idea about alphas or sigmas or any biology at all. He only knew he liked Zoe and was eager to learn from him. Any permanent hatred and rebellion in him was seen -by him- as fleeting; like a hundred-year comet not a regular moon.

Lyndon thought he was still capable of some kind of conjoining of his malice and good.

The square stock had been fused, joined, and the welds had burrowed deep into the seams, he saw. Lyndon still *laid rope* , as they said, when he welded; he moved too quickly and didn't penetrate the metal enough. *But Zoe's welds were like virgin births, like foundations laid in Genesis. They looked like fingers laced by man and wife and the metal on either side was the stone and buttress of basilica, the orthodox churches of Italy or Russia,* Lyndon thought.

He looked upon the joints and smiled and nodded in true appreciation of the art.

He admired Zoe and always would, and their *contretemps* at times would bother him. Few men didn't deserve Lyndon's opprobrium, but Zoe was one of maybe two. Lyndon had unjustly lashed out more than once at his mentor -while at Zendik and many years after- and it wracked him with guilt even as he sat in prison for forty-six murders; killings he didn't lose one second sleep over at all. Well, it did keep him up as he re-lived the joy and justice of such extra-judicial killings, *but*, he thought that he, *never felt anything approaching regret for that shit* . *However, he ought not have said mean -disrespectful- things to a man as competent as decent as Zoe.*

That he did regret.

He saw beauty in work; art in things well made for pragmatic ends but with poetry always close to the skin of prose. *Their whole life here was survival based but imbued with more meaning than the ersatz rituals of family and faux love in the DK* , he thought; and thought he saw that now more each day. They were truly in it together, these Zendiks and himself. He had never been conjoined in anyway within his family; they were fractured and individualistic and hated one another like captured birds forced by the gods to live inside one common cage.

He saw two-thirds of what was half turned toward the sun.

Even decades later, his brother would refuse to work with him, spitting out venomously that he didn't want to be in the quote, *weed business*, as if it were any more demersal than the *scotch business* .

Travis rejected any common cause with his younger brother; *he hated him and all he stood for, this objection to the weed business nonsense was just an excuse, of course. But excuses were all the middle-brow, middle-class man had*, he thought.

Their father had never taught them what the word *brother* meant. And so without this language the feeling remained unnamed; thus unnamed it became an orphan; and once a bastard it saw no profit in joining with other feelings at all.

This would redound three generations, like it did for rats in the cages of scientists who measured such things; lab technicians who removed mothers from baby rats to see what the consequences might be; and how long those effects might redound. But Lyndon unfairly maligned his brother for what was his father's -their father's- fault; and really what was their grandfather's fault. And really it went much farther back than that.

Lyndon didn't see it, Travis neither. But Arkansas and Appalachia and the ships of slaves and renegades and wet mariners all joined at the commissure of the ragged coast of the colonies long before the men who taught these brothers how to behave. No flower thinks of husk; no dawn of dusk. The brothers barely knew one generation back.

But how far could a mere man look? When was data, data enough? What gave man permission to stop and say: *here is first cause* .

Zoe -in the barn workshop of Vero Beach- then handed Lyndon the welding tip and nodded toward another hood, which Lyndon grabbed and then locked down upon his head. He had arrived with a head shorn of hair, and now it had begun to grow back a bit. He cinched it down and Zoe pointed to an edge that needed a tack weld and flipped his own hood down as if to say, *begin* .

Lyndon placed the tip within an inch and flipped his own hood down and pulled the MiG's trigger; the arc sparked and illuminated the area around the weld -in blue- on his side of the dark mask; he let it pool. Zoe said nothing and the metallic quarry did grow. He just let the pond of metal build like a little lake of silver and red-edged lava until it began to sink into the weld; he then pushed the fluid with the wire and slowly backed away; retreating and advancing the viscous fluid with the 3.0mm wire and the black and copper-colored tool.

It looked like silt on a bank or shore -windblown along a coast- and he slowed it down so much it made him mad; he had a young buck's spirit; a young man in a hurry. But he disciplined himself and let the weld develop. He pushed again until he reached Zoe's previous weld and let the molten metal join the two. He felt it was some small honor the universe would never acknowledge; like some handshake between *Hannibal* and *Caesar* or that photograph of *Fidel* and *Hemingway* he kept as bookmark inside

Ernest's first novel; the one Hemingway's parents had sent back to the publisher in disgust.

Hemingway had criticized Melville -and for that reason Lyndon would never forgive him- but when your own parents call your novel *no-good* , well, that was the kind of thing -an ancient wounding- that made Lyndon call Hemingway a comrade-in-arms. He figured when you shared common scars, whatever words use to describe it -whatever came next- was irrelevant.

He then thought of how Arol had wrinkled up her nose at the thought of why Cubans put up with *Fidel* . She had read in the New York Times of 5,000 murders by the July 26th movement after they won the war. She trusted the corporate media it seemed. People find all manner of reasons condemn violence; even if they *gotta* trust the Grey Lady herself to do it.

Lyndon had written a letter to Arol a year after he left the farm and attempted to school her in a language she did not speak: *manliness and liberty and honor* .

"Maybe they -and I've heard some men are built like this- maybe they didn't like being told what to do by the US; as Cuba had been a mere proxy of the States under Batista. Maybe they thought that they preferred voluntary poverty to wearing the diamond studded yoke of the Yankees," he had written knowing he'd get no reply. Autocrats like Arol do not reply to such things.

"I ain't no Communist and I ain't a Nazi either, but Hitler had a point and so did *Che* . See, they weren't wrong, they were merely insane; and a man has a right to go insane when he's bludgeoned and beaten and driven into the mud by life and by men who use the weight of their machines to augment their own tawdry power.

He had written in long hand to Arol in 2000: Have you ever even read what Hitler went through in World War I? Or what *Che* saw on his *La Podestera II -The Mighty One* - the Norton motorbike he rode from Argentina up to Mexico? He was there in '54 when the CIA overthrew *Allende* . He -a doctor if you'll recall- tended to exiled lepers and it leaped into his soul that all that *Bolivar* had seen was each part of what *Che* now saw too.

He saw the now -but *felt* this *history* too- of the subjugation of an entire continent by the capitalists of the north. He was pissed and rightly so. Every man has a right to rebel when he sees how badly most men are treated by the beautiful people; those ugly fucks in charge.

It isn't up to you or rich men, *effete* men, to lecture Great men. Sure, if these Great men are our enemies, which Hitler and *Che* were, then we have a right to *kill* them, but we have no right to *lecture* them. But, over oysters and *Borolo* you want to cluck your tongue. These were Great men, men who did something, something wrong and evil, but something true to their natures.

See, we have the right to be wrong in defense of liberty and honor and dignity. From before the Jews came out of Egypt, back before *Marduk* in Mesopotamia, the people had imbued their kings with the souls of gods, the archetypes of moral behavior, of the right and wrong of individuals. The Jews said the gentiles may not have the Law, but they have it inscribed upon their bodies; the Egyptians said not just the Pharaoh but the aristocracy too had *Osiris'* and *Horus'* soul inside of them.

The Christians said all men had the spark of God, let that little light of mine shine, let it shine.

Our own forefathers said each man had a right to redress his grievances. Huey Long said each man a King. You see, life is war, as Hobbes said. And each man is set against another. This world is bent on our destruction, and each man has a right to fight back *by any means necessary* as Malcolm X once rightly said.

It doesn't mean men have to like these tactics or the propaganda of their enemies; but we ought to respect any man who fights for that in which he believes. Unlike the modern man who gets fat and rich and so satisfied with himself as his liberty and dignity rot away on vines he never tends to anyway. Money, money, money that is all you people give one fuck about; well, some of us -as crazy as we may be- we still think a man's soul is more valuable than all your glittery gold.

Stack it up as high as you like, but you won't lay our souls low; you won't use our backs to build upon. And I stand with any man who fights; I don't give a fuck why. Because life is war, war, war. And all your

liberal hippie shit is a lie and if it is one thing a real man cannot stand it is lies. So, you can pretend not to understand *Che* or *Fidel* or their *Cubans* , fine; but I understand them totally, even if I hate their ideology.

At least they don't just capitulate and cower and slink away and bury their dignity in shallow graves next to their bank accounts. And Hitler wasn't a bad artist after all...

But today in that mechanic's shop he cleaned the bearing for the shaft and welded just a little corner of the metal that Zoe was using to shroud the new well from which they would all drink. Today -with his soul being corrupted so early and so slightly that even he didn't notice- today, *he was twenty-four years old and alive and part of something small and poor*, but something that he felt, *was truly great* .

5. The Water of the Womb

But I would not stand between any man and his genius; and to him that does this work, which I decline, with his whole heart and soul and life, I would say, Persevere, even if the world call it doing evil, as it is they most likely will Walden; or Life in the Woods [Thoreau, Henry D]

I have only one strong emotion left, and that is hatred for the forces that have destroyed so many human beings, including myself. For relative to what I could have become, I regard myself as destroyed Sobre el Dialogo [Bohm, David]

The ways of God are without partiality. It is not permissible to harm one another in order to profit one's self. Is there any article from China that has done any harm to foreign countries? On the other hand articles that come from outside to China can only be used as toys, we can take them or get by without them. There is however a treacherous class of barbarians that manufacture opium, smuggle it for sale, and deceive our foolish people in order to poison their bodies and derive profit therefrom. Not to smoke it yourselves but yet dare to prepare and sell it to the foolish masses of the middle kingdom? This is to protect one's own life while leading others to death Letter to Queen Victoria [Hsu, Lin Tse]

I. 2020 e.v.

"We don't know what it will do to have women in political power in the West," he said as he had been speaking for forty-five minutes and now had been asked a question by the audience about diversity in the political domains. "We have fifty years of data on birth-control and the fall-out from that; we have less even of women in politics and I can tell you that we are fooling ourselves if we think we know the repercussions.

"Now, normally traits tested by psychologists in attitudinal or behavioral phenomena -while they do map onto each sex- they can be equalized by including feminine men and masculine women; the gender differences can

be controlled for a bit. But with political correctness, it seems that the gendered nature of it is pretty significant even if you try to level it with including masculine women and feminine men.

“Political correctness is largely a female phenomenon.

“Women are much more politically correct than men; even butch females are typically more PC than swishy men. But even men who are PC are largely that way due to women; they curry favor with women by acting this way.

“This is going to have an effect on the culture as more and more women take political power; but even if they merely maintain the power they already have over men’s balls. And we need to acknowledge this.

“Now, maybe it’s a good thing,” he said with an ironic smirk, “maybe if we look at the biological underpinning to it; the idea was this it seems: the idea was that women had to be distributors throughout history. Conversely, it was men who were producers, and so -in the genius of evolution- it was left to women to make sure everyone got enough; even the unpopular kid at the table or the runt of the litter right?

“Well, if women are hardwired to make sure everyone gets enough, then maybe that is exactly what they’ll do once in power. Which is fine as long as you understand the consequences; and the consequences are that even people who aren’t productive will get the same share as you do. Ask yourself how you feel about that?

“That’s some Marxist shit just waiting to happen, and I can tell you, there are certain segments of the population that won’t stand for it. Let me blunt for those who cannot read between the lines. Equity leads to war; it must. Because men -productive men- will not stand for it. Eventually, things will come to a head.

“I’m referring to the outlaws, the barbarians of our culture, and maybe you don’t see them, because they tend to live in the rural areas, not the cities. They find cities to be effeminate and gross; filthy. So, you won’t see them, but they are out there. Look, you don’t see microbes, but they exist. And they too are deadly.

“I’m just saying we cannot predict when. I am saying it could happen today or not for a thousand more years. So, don’t assume you are in some state of inevitable revolution; you might have to make the revolution happen, you may have to start the world over with your actions; not your mere notions or ideas or wishes,” he nodded to conclude his answer to the man as the audience applauded; the lights came up as did his arm and hand to block the pain from these lumens; these beams upon him.

Isaiah watched the video again and then looked at the genome he had deciphered and read as well.

He marked 519 alleles and 1,988 specific gene expressions over a 5-day period he’d been able to get data on in July. He had extracted DNA from the man *via* a blood sample taken *via nanobot* that had traveled out to *Waldang* in Oregon as they gathered for a ritual for a fallen comrade.

Isaiah had built a map to what motivated and resonated with this man, Jack Donovan, and stored it on his own CNS; deleting it from the corporate cloud. He had already built algorithms for each member of the *Wolves of Vinland* in Wyoming and Virginia. Jack was proving to be more difficult due to his sexual proclivity for men; the loyalty *chems* were annealed to sexual reverie and this made it tougher to dissect and harness. Isaiah could do it, but Jack was just more complex than most. He was a visual & language artist both; this was rare.

Isaiah downloaded all his art and words.

Jack had attempted -twice- to leave the *Wolves* . But he kept crawling back. And Isaiah watched from 30,000 feet above and 3nm below.

Isaiah had decided to stop micro-managing the process; he let his mind build algorithms -undirected- with just one instruction: *find out what will make this man trust another man quickly, deeply, and with lasting affect and monomania independent of any sexual halo*. “Invigilate the genome and build me a map to the stars,” Isaiah said aloud as he programmed the algorithms and then he returned his attention to the ant colony to which he had given new aphids -as gift- twenty-three hours before.

He belayed his instinct to read their pheromones and just watched them moved in the tunnels and out into the light of the lab’s 18-hour day.

He thought of things that meant nothing; he let himself wander about the mind.

II. 2020 e.v.

He awoke in the dark.

He immediately looked up to the first apparent stars and searched for a constellation. He saw Orion to his port side, and knew it winter, and likely 0300-0400hrs by its position; by its elevation in the vault.

He listened for any sounds, as one -he assumed- had possibly aroused him; and it would take a second sound for it to make him aware of its source. He heard nothing -but the wind out of the south- and he thus released his held breath. He always assumed -once awake- that it was something amiss and afoot that had roused him.

He believed no longer in natural awakenings.

He was cold, but not freezing; it was above 32-degrees, he surmised. The moon was under the earth and so the blackness below starline was complete -only the beyond-sky was illuminated- and he marveled at its millions of visible stars and albedo planets. It was no wonder the ancients were in awe of the skies. *One cannot get a view of the vault like this, in the light-pollution of the goddamn city; the city ruined everything. It was the tumor, the cancer that blocked out all things godly,* he thought.

But, he knew even the tumor had a right to exist.

He had to urinate and began to slough off the mummy bag he had been ensconced within and he walked two paces along the ground to safely relieve himself away from his bedding. He was on slip rock, a half-acre of boulders and flat rock well beyond his property, past the eastern edge; he was so far away from the high-cube containers that he couldn't see them even with his binoculars. He saw no other structure at all.

His eyes were adjusted to the dark -open apertures, fully dilated pupils- and he scanned the ground for any movement but saw none. The skins of the arachnids saw starlight; but nothing paid him any mind. He was too large for them to care for; and that which could -and would- eat him were far away from his simple camp.

His muscles were sore. This was an endless feeling of embodiment and he increased his testosterone levels slightly and added a few milligrams of endogenous opiates to soften the ache. His feedback loops all reported levels that were nominal and not beyond the envelope he had created when his PGC had been installed. Testosterone was set for 800-1,400 free; and 450-650 of bio-available -serum test- levels.

Even the androgen exhaust was measured while lost.

He could go beyond those levels for short spurts -and he did- but due to the annoyance of tumor growths and apoptosis enzyme methylation -and the prostate gland's response to the hormone- he kept it within baseline 98% of the time.

He had to balance these things.

It was phenomena the body usually regulated all on its own, and thus was typically too complex for human conscious overriding. It was only his coder's algorithm and uplink -to the PraXis cloud- that allowed him to navigate the nuances of biology and endocrinology and cellular life homeostasis without total catastrophe.

But, he immediately felt a pang of regret for his reflexive augmentation of this hormone and analgesic levels: the whole point of this excursion was to provoke hardship and thus a hardship response. He was shaking his dick and head at the same time; then zipping up and walking back to his bag mumbling about his bad habits and toggling down the very systems he had just toggled up. The wind picked up and blew at his aft and right flank.

He'd embrace the suck and let the pain wash over him; "the pain," he said aloud, "was the point."

He hadn't slept inside a structure in four days and he had eaten only what he had trapped or killed; drank only water from the snow pack he'd melted -in a small camp pot he brought- on a fire he built each day. He drank one dram of blood from bird he'd boiled over the wood-fire.

He had stuck to small animals as he didn't want to clean a doe or buck; also feeling the meat would go to waste. *If he ran out of rabbit, rock chucks, chipmunks and wild turkey*, he thought, *then he'd shoot a deer if necessary* . But so far he had used his 12-gauge with light loads to dispatch small game.

He ate well; two meals a day. He was well hydrated as the snow was readily available to melt and from which to make *shark-coffee* or *cam-jack tea* .

He hiked -each day- out into the 1.6 million acres that surrounded his property. This allowed his excursions to last up to five hours one way; he figured he could return within a mile of his original campsite in a homecoming route -slightly slowed by fatigue- in another five hour trip. He'd hunt along the path and he had bottled boiled-snow to drink during the day. He took time to check his internal map, an app in his PGC that laid right onto his *somatosensory* legend.

The land felt as familiar -and as strange- as his body.

The unknown regions, of which there were plenty -about 99.4% of this land was opaque to him as of yet- would appear as the mysterious sections of his own body and psyche to him, that is to say, they were -as of yet- undiscovered but not exactly foreign either.

It was all him, just waiting to be tattooed, scored, brushed off, and revealed.

He walked with the conditional confidence one has as an apex predator in the wilderness; a wilderness that one assumes is trying to kill you as soon as it figures out how. But, one assumes there is time, plenty of time before lower beings figure this out.

He strode as if he had all the time in the world. the landscape was wide and long, the sky far up, the elements deep. Time too was elongated and everything -thus- was large.

“That is not dissimilar to one’s body is it?” he asked aloud. “This thing is conspiring against me at all times,” he smiled after he talked to his body. He hadn’t spoken to another person in eight months. He liked talking to himself; thinking three or four sentences, then speaking aloud with the next. There was a rhythm to it; it helped him think when he spoke aloud every so often; maybe 30% of the time.

He returned to his sleeping bag and lay down; he rolled on his flank then lay on his back; the neck would never allow for anything but a coffin type sleep; with arms straight at his sides.

He almost always thought in terms of three now.

Everything had to be run through a fractal analysis; one level above and below the level examined. He adjusted and felt his 50/50 blade in his pocket; his skinner was attached to his pack. Annoyed, he removed the folder and then in *lieu* of tossing it aside he felt a desire to carve into the rock. He let the blade open and lock and then he began carving idiopathically into the rock.

He could no more see it with his eyes than with his mind. He just carved for a few minutes until he felt he had made something and sank back down into his mummy bag and let his lids close. The night glowed above and was total black below, and he watched from the quarterdeck of his somnambulistic ship as the sea-dreams began to roll in against his hull. The coder let him power down, releasing .04nm of DMT and diazepam to reduce his heartrate which was elevated -along with BP- and had been at levels the coder did not feel was safe or conducive for rest.

He lay unconscious -black knife loosely held in his unfurled hand- for six minutes and then began to dream: He was alone on miles of ice.

But the ice was covered in 3-inches of snow, and there were prints heading away from him in four directions. He turned only his head, but noticed each track: a snow leopard, a snake, a mule-deer buck, with what looked like the dragging of tail, and a raven with three feet, or two birds maybe, he thought, with one of the two fowl dismasted.

The sky -he noticed- was low and grey. He was flanked on all sides by trees as black as Georgian slave funerals and he felt the presence of Christ in them: bleeding, seething, wishing him ill. Christ was held back, he assumed by the forest, which hemmed Him in. But He beckoned; He dared him to enter the clos du bois.

He finally moved his feet; they were bare, but not cold. He made a circle by running on the heels; he left no toe imprints at all.

He stepped into the first print by the four beasts, the asp had feet, as this was before the Fall, of course. The asp, he noticed, his belly did drag here and there.

Why was Jesus even around if the Fall hadn't happened? he thought; he was beginning now to worry, as this was not how the story was supposed

to be told. He hated unknown unknowns , he thought. I can deal with murder and malice and everything falling apart, but not with people fucking with the rules, he added.

He issued a missive to God, the good God of the Old Testament -the book that was the newest edition of what was olden and true- and he was specific and he insisted that he be given a hearing. The letter went out on the feet of birds with six-wings; they flew by and stabbed his demarche with a talon fractured in colors of unwoven white and he took one more step into the path of the asp and held steady waiting for a reply.

The wind rose up as it always did up here.

He felt he was on some parallel peak from his own land; the ridgelines were like waves, in succession, and they were capped, like the pyramid on the dollar, shorn off just below the top, and his own house -when viewed from the west and east- looked like the elevated triangle with the one eye. But this ridgeline was larger, he noticed, and it was covered in ice. As he thought the ice was odd, the wind blew the snow off to the south, the direction of the ravens. He was certain now it was two of them; one merely missing that lower leg, he concluded, as the wind blew beneath him and the blackbirds.

The ice was white and fissured and a dark water was below with huge frozen plumes -bubbles of varying sizes- underneath like the heads of bolte mushrooms; the frozen globes of air were white against the black water and between it and the ice.

As he peered at them, his eyes pulled back and he noticed -as if from his own analogy- small black bolte mushrooms on top of the ice distributed in a map of the heavens it seemed: the big dipper, to his north, Ursa Major and Minor below - bathing in the Ocean's waves of Odysseus- then the flying fish of the Volans; the beta and zeta volantis like eyes to his southeast. He marveled, and then heard God speak almost as he had forgotten of his demand to the Being all the seconds -eternities- ago.

“ Blax, this better be good; I am very busy and have many things to do,” God said with a vex measured in joules. Blax could hear the gallons of

slobber sloshing, feel the hot-torqueing rotator-cuff joints of the black bears in malice of five.

He seemed to be fleeing on a roan-grey charger 100 world-hands high.

Blax was able to see Him as well as hear Him through an aperture in the dark-daylight of sky. Then the trailing Ursa were in view on His flank, at His six, and three and nine; The stygian bear were white only between blood vessels of eye; deep in at the bone; and where worn down at claw scarred by this moon-rock and their prey's ribs once separated from their own meat.

Blax saw that the bear were colossal.

They were clearly out for His blood.

“ Look, You make the rules, life is that way; I got no problem with that. But, when You fuck with my map -when the narrative doesn't match the facts- I get nervous and I lose my focus on the Good,” Blax said as he watched the three mammoth ursine gain and lose ground in the mortar shell blasts of each hoof of God's roan grey mare.

Blax saw that each tread of the God-Horse was bomb-blast; each thing God did was extreme.

“ Your focus on the Good is independent of everything else; that is all the map you need. Embrace the chaos, don't worry about making sense of things; you whip chaos about the eyes; you tell that which confuses you to eat shit; make disorder your bitch. Be a man. That's why I put you fuckers on the earth in proportions exact and in accordance with the math.

“ You have a job to do. Enter into muck, make something -make the world- from it,” God said as He tacked starboard into the lead bear, jamming His boot and its crampon-style outrigger into the ursine's hide with ballistic speed and force. The black bear roared in anger as blood spurted out all over God's leg and the bear bit at the Being's boot in revenge.

The black bear scarred -scored- the leather of God's heel but no more.

He kept kicking; the metal of boot on bear sparking; but now with a cumulonimbus fog at the feet. Molecules of pure water nucleated with one bacteriophage frozen; a convection of blood drops appeared all about Him and the bears. It appeared as night sky with blue like her reaching eyes and reds as clutched novae.

As Blax lost the power to blink, the ground that God and his enemies trod upon became negatively charged, and the shadow of positive charge appeared in the sky just above the bear. Vascular lightning sprouted up from the ground; its brachia like a five-fingered demiurge from the grave shooting to and through and electrocuting the bear as God's charger timed its gallop so all four legs were safely above the conducting ground of the white steppe.

The closest bear shorted out and turned inside out and died nearly all at once.

The second bear veered off and began grumbling; a call from the south for reinforcements no doubt. God charged on His steed and pulled arrows from His quiver and threaded His oaken bow all in one move; it looked like 21 horishi; like a sun behind moon at noon; like a man's life all in one stroke of an artist's brush as large as a witch's broom.

God drew back the black arrow and shot it down into the ground. A hole opened up -a wound- as if they had been treading on clouds. He and the mare -and 1,000 cubits of air- disappearing with one last word to Blax, "Now!"

Blax was both buoyed and chagrined. He took God's advice and rebuke and vote of confidence all as one thing. Then from the west he saw a black dot in the star's eye just below the grey clouded sky.

He watched it -this singularity- as it seemed to spin on its axis and grow in size and then drop. He felt his arms itch; so he scratched them and noticed his armature; leather and epoxy shielding made of horse hides of Pinto and Draught. They had marking in rust-red; he noticed the elbow of his right arm first; the Greek letters for what his eyes read as: in filth there it will be found. And his hand guard had only a red cog wheel with tiny letter embossed in them, in French: guerre à outrance.

He looked back up at the sky and noticed the black dot was advancing and he dropped his head to the dark tree line and saw Jesus scurry about as if searching for the perfect tree from which to launch an attack.

Blax looked at the ground and the tracks and noticed each trail had reversed and was now heading heel-to-toe toward him; his knees were covered in two large horsehide shields that ran down his skins and up to his groin. The knees were brown and the lettering white; left knee tattooed in Scots' runes: three parallel lines with a slash, - an / - vivisecting them. The right knee was a cypher, and around it like petals to a flower in English it said: I'm a big believer in Vengeance, a man in my Position has to be.

He took his left hand -ignoring the left-hand guard- and held it up toward -in defense, rebuke- the black dot as it advanced. Immediately - beyond time- the dot became God's arrow, murky, broadhead, covered in snow and mist and condensation, right before him in time and space. Blax grasped it mid-air right before his chest. It was warm and felt like a writhing snake itself, flexible and full of increasing malice and desire for his chest; closed to coins of gold.

Blax bit the broad head off and spit it to the ground and shoved the shaft into his left hand; through the handguard. The fletching -Martian and Enflamed and feathered of some Heavenly fowl- was close to the back of his hand like a bird sticking its head in the sand.

The shaft stuck out half a meter from his palm and it writhed until it began a caduceus helix, and vines grew about it in punctuated fits and starts. Chains, rusted and laced with flowers -the Roman purples of morning glories and the starfighters with corten-red stamens- were stretched out from the tree line across the pond in each direction; a four-cornered ring now was about him.

He fell to his knees in place and held both hands, palms, to the ground. The arrow shaft and vines sank into the snow and ice; they drilled down as the right hand turned white. He knelt and cursed Jesus, and told him: I'm coming for you now.

The left hand's gourd-guard had merely a white drawing of a 18th century lock; and the shaft had perfectly pierced the semaphore of key

hole.

“ A man really can do anything, this is the truth hidden from the weak and the timid,” *he said under his breath. He loved pain; God he loved pain; for he knew its slake.*

He could feel the root stock winding down into the 30-degree salt water pond and producing perfectly ripe noble-rot grapes of Sauternes. He held the clusters in his mind as if he and Lucretius and Epicurus and Seneca might all share from one goblet; one heavy London glass. But he first had to meet Christ on the battle field and let Him win one third of the time. Jesus refused to play unless Blax was fair about it, and they would have to fight enough times to justify the expense of all this travel abroad.

What is Jesus? *he thought* , is He my consciousness, my self-awareness? Is He something beyond even that? Does He live like integers in the math?

“Yes, but only within this culture, this context, for there is another embodiment of consciousness; and it is that,” *the voice spoke*, “it is that which is less mundane to you. That is the Holy Ghost and it is that that will defeat you two thirds of the time. Why else do you avoid her?”

“ Because she won’t let me win enough, ” *he blurted out* , “it ain’t fair. I play fair with Jesus; the Ghost must play fair with me.”

The crows had returned and looked at one another and -with each taking the third word- speaking they said, “ You think you let Jesus win 33 out of 100 times? But the truth is that He lets you win 777 out of 1,000.”

The snow leopard howled in staccato from the mountain top in the west; the snake was nowhere to be found. But he heard what sounded like wind in his ear, “ The Ghost you let win 10 out of 10.”

He ignored the hand he rested on and stared at the fletching of feathers that rose up like a sore & dark bush. It occluded the hard hand-guard and its lock-drawing and he wondered about what kind of birds he’d hunt in heaven and what kind of worms might hunt him.

He knelt for what seemed two days and two nights; the one moon and the four suns rotated like a torque wrench set to 92 pounds. He let the

vines auger and grow down and the fruit-clusters burst and icy seabass harvest them and stuff them down into giant tubs below -punching down into the cap, yellow and brown and skins of bloodred- he let the crows come and go and upbraid him for avoiding a fight with the Christ.

He knelt and he refused yet to rise.

He let the leopard pace on the mountain miles to the east and he let the trees rattle the chains with the help of the wind. But he knelt. He ignored the temptation to rise.

And he knelt because his head would not lift, and his eyes could only look at God's arrow's fletching, and he watched as the heavenly bird's plumes turned watery and the colors blended and his chest heaved now and the birds -the black ravens- they seemed to back away and the leopard -too- seemed to pause; but the chains rattled on.

And he sobbed. His eyes seemed a lake now, a Lyngvi, he thought, as the word appeared and was bordered by his face; some Amsvartnir continent he might have once been born upon.

He heaved in his chest and he knew Christ could see this, and he felt angry at his own weakness as he felt it made the weakness of Christ look strong in comparison. He knelt, and he cried, and his eyes remained wide. The water poured out and bored through the ice and the snow -like high-velocity Hagal, the gift of ice-grains from the skies- fell in rows. His mouth gaped and sounds that only dogs and wolves might hear came out, and he knelt; he stayed kneeling in corporeal shame.

He knew how to do Good; but he couldn't make his mouth into the shape of the words. His body could do Good; he had done it, many times. But his words always made sharp and violent shapes in the air; he incessantly angered his fellow man.

And he fought with Jesus, and the demons cheered him, and he ignored the rational mind no matter which side it took. He fought bare chested and with knuckles raw; he fought without concern for the dead; and he ought to have honored them, he knew. He fought now, on Indian burial grounds; he fought now on the floor of the ancient senate; he fought now

on head of a pin; he fought with vapors and they let him win again and again until he was ashamed.

He had played fair, he tried to blurt out, but he merely thought it, and the tears and sobbing had overtaken his language and even his language-cortex was off-line. He thought now only in images. He saw babies, and colts, and pups in wolf dens; he saw hatchlings and the pupae on the ground. He saw nebulae and vast shallow oceans like puddles in Pangea; he saw a uterine wall. He saw his own amniotic fluid slick back his own natal hair. It was white like the Siberian, the Amur tiger, the muscovite winters, the flame tip at the end of canon fire. It was like ash on the face of Druggen tribesmen, like the moon in both the dark and the light.

He heaved like concrete in the cold, his body shook, his arms nearly buckled; only anger now, held him up. He was enraged at this complete fucking breakdown, but it didn't stop the hot tears, the wailing, the pain in his chest, the weakness of throat, the total lack of bracing words.

He failed.

In this world of upside-downs it held him off the ice; his chest and face off the frost. "That is it," he said with spit; his knees and shins were welded to it; his hands were one with the rime. The wine vines, the ice-wines, had grown back up through the white crust of frozen pond water and pierced his right hand now. A bud had emerged from the skin; it was alive but still beneath the hand guard. It bored and tapped and cracked it, and a green and black shoot licked like a tongue though the horsehide guard on the back of his hand.

He cried, for two more days and what seemed half a fortnight of hours punctuated by heavenly bodies streaking the sky. It was like long-gun fire and comets hurled by Mars and Aries and worse. The ice melted in two holes opposite his two eyes, it was now all he could see as it was directly in front of him: two black abysses in the shape of his eyes, straight in front and he looked and he looked. The blackness of the water seemed almost blue now, almost sane, almost soft and almost with a bottom. But his eyes rebelled against it all and everything went suddenly black; suddenly clear.

He begged for relief, but not from the sadness, for he was sure he had earned that.

He asked that all the pain he had caused could be shot like a bullet into his skull and end him once and for all. “ I’ll forego my revenge,” he said, in words that came up from the deep, “I’ll forego my right for vengeance, if the wrongs I did can just be -if not undone- compacted into one adamantine ballistic and fired from the gun of the universe; bury it in my brain, let it fall to rest in my soul. And melt us all down into one combination of chemicals that never solidify again. Keep my crimes and my Self and my conscious mind liquid, keep it heated, keep it wet and at bottom of the vessels empty of light.

“ I forgo my right to revenge against these demons on earth, for I now know they aren’t even humans; they are Satan’s minions sent to earth to make me do evil. They have won the first 9 out of 10; turn them all into a bullet and fire it into my brain and I’ll call that a victory, a first of 10 victories. Please God, don’t let this weight collect anymore mass in my chest. Protect the Heart, if not for me, then from me,” he finally said.

The tears poured down like twin falls, like Angel Falls, mist mingling with his fallen hair and the mucus and wind-blown snow. His words were spit into these cataracts of fluid as they pierced the ice and filled the void. He just couldn’t handle the malice, the malevolence of the world, he wanted no part of it; he wanted out. To live he must stand, and to stand he had to be proud, and to be proud he needed all his biochemistry from serotonin to dopamine to testosterone to endogenous opiates to all buoy him and for these systems to flood him enough to lift him up off the floor of sea-bottom, he needed to prevail over his mendacious and low-brow enemies, he couldn’t lose nor suffer a single draw.

And to win, to win, he mused , he had to commit to total war, to guerre à outrance. There was no other fucking way; they outnumbered him 1,000,000 to one. They fought dirty, they had no souls, they lied, they cheated and they felt nothing; they felt no pain, no sorrow, no regret; they were demons and he couldn’t seem to get that through to anyone at all.

Everyone thought the world was populated with people just like them, more or less good-at-heart. He had been ripped off and lied to and made fun of and undermined and had his heart pulled out by the roots; he had lost 12 lives through perfidy and fraud and theft; he had been dared to get his revenge; he had been cuckolded and talked about by men claiming to be his friends; he had been accused of thieving multiple times when he had gone out of his way to never steal one dime; he had given up his own salary to men who used that very income to buy the fuel to burn down his home as they stood and warmed their hands over the fire; he had been mocked by men who were jealous and vindictive when he had never lorded over them despite his nearly natural size and corporeal strength; he had eschewed violence and they had taken this as weakness and he had had everything taken from him in the end.

But, he had his eyes opened; unlike his foolish species -who hadn't been ripped off even once much less a dozen times- and unlike the bourgeois of this world, he saw the bestiary as it was. The bad people -nay, demons- ruled it and they had been drawn to him like piped water draws buried roots from the upright trees.

He was a steel pipe strangled by these manifold roots, and he was collapsing, he felt, from their grip. Unless he burst his hot heart shell upon them, unless he self-immolated and burned them down by the roots, they'd just continue to insinuate themselves through the ground we all trod upon while everyone else marveled at their boughs. Who else saw that boughs above matched roots below, who else but Satan and God? he thought. " But people just swept up the leaves!" he barked aloud, thinking: They never think of us underground.

The shoot on his right hand split and phototropically oriented toward first the grey light of the rising sun; but as the star sped across the sky - days 8 minutes long now- the bud bloomed and oriented towards him. He felt warm, and his hands unglued from the ice; his knees sank with heat and pressure into the surface. His chest felt hollowed out, but he heard the thuds of his heart begin to beat in double-tap rhythms of yore.

His eyes dried, he saw a ship in the foreground, his head rose to meet his already uplifted eyes.

The trees had been hewn down and fashioned into a vessel of enormous size. The black flag ran up the mizzen mast, it reached to a hammer-handed sailor made of crow and wolves and iron rivets so new they still glowed orange from the forge. On the quarter deck was a shorn Christ, epaulets on his shoulders, forearms tattooed with rank, a cutlass at his side, scabbarded but half drawn, his teeth black but grinning away.

“ How do you know what’s real on the shore, landlubber?” Christ called out.

“ Pain is real; bedrock pain. How do you savvy what’s real on the sea, Captain?” Blax spat out with saline tears and spittle and almost no malice.

*“ The numbered side of the brain is dedicated to order, to rational language and the terrain written down and made flat; the underside of the mind is a bulwark against chaos, it has image welded in one hand and novelty tied in twine to its boot. These are the regions Nature has developed, a symmetrical hemispheric brain and mind; this is no accident or *chtocka* of life, this is Darwinian proof,” Christ said as he handed his first mate a match.*

“ Of what you bastard?” Blax asked.

“ That the most real things are Pain and Meaning, and you are built to handle them both; now climb aboard, and stuff yourself into the long guns so I can fire you back into the world above the Hadrian Wall,” Christ said and threw down a grappling hook barbed and covered in pitch.

On the prow was stenciled in matte grey on black bark lumber, “ God’s Pique.” The ship began busting the ice as its sails filled with an Old Testament gale.

The wind blew him along and off the ice and he slid toward the leaving ship; he pulled the vines along the craquelure of his white floor; ripping the ice up as he ran. Grape clusters burst up from the pond and the crows swarmed them in the air driving their black beaks into the frozen noble rot and drinking the warm center to his aft. He grabbed the barbed line and let the hooks piece both hands; he squeezed harder upon

the pain -the pain being the only thing real in his ontology, the only thing to trust- he looked at it with one eye and grasped it with his right hand like a predator holds onto his prey.

His eyes awoke to the dawn, and he breathed out a white cloud of condensate exhalation.

The sky was light enough that the stars had been banished and he spoke, “you get away with nothing,” thus repeating God’s injunction and he banked once -a few degrees- and bent up at the waist. He took a breath in and looked to the ground. He rubbed his palm as it itched, and the thumb came back with blood. *Isaiah 45:7* had been written in finger scrawl on the dirt just to the right of his bedding, he saw it, read it, and covered it with the bedding as he flung his arms out and he rose to his goddamn feet.

To his six was the carving in the slip rock, the blood from his palm had filled its lines, and it read out in two words from two peoples and he never looked once upon it; and he never saw it again.

III. 2038 e.v.

“There’s no need for foreplay,” the man said.

“Fair enough, I need a man killed. And I need it done when I cannot be blamed for it,” Jack said.

“Give me his name, location, and the dates that work,” *Vlatko Babic* said and looked to the lee and starboard side of this kid he neither liked nor trusted at all. The Mississippi bar ran a low-grade fever of talk and music and was punctuated with the cracks of billiard balls and barks of men who took such games seriously. *Vlatko* didn’t sit in the back, he sat right in the middle of the establishment.

He didn’t do things the way nervous people did.

He allowed the paper he had written upon earlier to lay to his own lee side. It -the paper- was smooth and lined, the black ink was ragged and he often used Ts and A’s without cross bars. They looked like pikes driven into the earth, chevrons like shields between letters of half English and *calques* of hostile and vulnerable Romanian words.

I fought with my brother yesterday. We were both drunk. I was anyways. We still have our teeth, our muscles and brains are sore. So bruised, dirty, and I don't know where the blood came from. A shower for each later; we grudgingly look at each other and admit no wrongs, but acknowledge that we might have crossed sacred lines. Then we poured shots of bourbon and ignored it. But it didn't ignore us.

That's what brotherhood is about. But it don't solve for the forces without.

I stood in the rain the next day, laughing aloud at the majesty of it. The rain ran out of my beard, and I thought, ' maybe I'm clean now.' Then I realized that this wasn't God really letting me go. This was God telling me to go again. Water is water. Wine is wine. A wet beard is better than no beard.

I'll cut it off tomorrow and regrow it. Our father will wait.

He had written that as he waited for this man to arrive. His pen lay inside his jacket that itself covered scars that ran up most of each arm.

He let some thoughts leak out -pressure-release, pop-off valves- that had to shear off 16-penny nails or the whole mudtank of this man from the *Balkans* would blow. He'd never call himself an *orphan* , for he still had parents in his mind. But they were dead, and he had had no instruction since the age of five. He needed money to finance his real wishes, his own desires for vengeance that he seemed farther and farther away from each time he got close. He watched as things moved slowly when he stopped, and scurried as he made effort toward them.

He had thought of eight days in a row. Eight days previous to today. His hip and leg hurt, his pants hid the cancer lodged in him; it was the shape of a globe. His teeth ached and he could see it was snowing by the bar's window's fragmentary -black & white chaos- and as the man -his contact- sat down, he saw the white brought in from outside along the shoulders and crooks and ditches of his arms.

He noticed from time to time -as they spoke- that it melted into the fabric - turning black- in the warmth.

Munly and the Lee Lewis Harlots played now on the jukebox; the wail of a two-brother tale reached into him. The yodeling sawed through his own bones. The story began with a boy *none and three* . The bull of black would come. The strings of the fiddle would crescendo, too. The music was weather to the landscape of words. A birth of words and notes would arrive all at once.

“*Like a Caesar* ,” the song finally said as each man looked about.

Noise of chairs pulling out and sliding and creaking under the weight of the heavier young man took up only corners of his *audio cortex* , the song was merely framed by this. *Vlatko*’s own voice didn’t occlude the music at all. It -the music- dominated. The music always did.

Jack Four had -after *Vlatko* told him to get to it- slid him a piece of tea-stained paper with Jack Donovan’s real name and address in Oregon state and the time window of December 19th through the 30th in which Jack Four had planned to be -and would be- in Virginia with the *Wolves* for the *solstice* .

Vlatko let the folded paper sit on the table and drank his bourbon and breathed heavily through his nose.

He stared at Jack and debated even taking the paper -and thus the assignment- as the bastard seemed like trouble wrapped in a pretty package of stupid doom. *The prettier the package, Vlatko thought, the more trouble it likely was.* He signaled for the pen Jack had used to write on the page and when Jack handed it over *Vlatko* wrote IV on the paper and asked if Jack wanted a drink. *Vlatko* tried to be polite; he was southern after all.

Jack said *no* and *Vlatko* put the pen in his jacket.

He raised his arm to signal the waitress and when she arrived he ordered coffee, making sure to make eye contact with her. He wanted Jack to know he did not scare *Vlatko* enough to make him unable to take his eyes from him.

Jack was just a kid, Vlatko thought, and this kid thought killing a man this way was like ordering a meal . He didn’t realize *Valtko* was a man. A man with a history, a man with feelings, a man with links in a chain going back hundreds of years. *Vlatko* would -of course- do it; but that didn’t mean it

was done without feelings and consequences and ripples out in the large pond that Jack thought he was inured to because he stood on the shore. *Babic* hated nothing so much as people who thought money solved everything, instead of acknowledging it merely solved one-third of a problem and that the other two-thirds still needed addressed.

Addressed , he thought. *Not solved; but acknowledged* .

Americans , he thought. *They speak when they ought to shut up and they say nothing when a few words of respect might avoid a shit load of trouble in the end.* *Vlatko* then noticed a scar that ran from the temple passed the ear and into the jaw, a jaw that flexed and produced a knot of a muscle at the joint as Jack Four smiled and pulled out his own bottle, a pint, and drank from it as if nobody would mind at all.

Jack drank and returned the bottle to his inside pocket of jacket and spied the writing at the bottom of the page nine inches passed this man -this contact- that *Isaiah* had finally given him after all this back and fucking forth when the plan had been debated *ad infinitum* .

Jack read and saw that the words were fiction as each word began to build a story and *Vlatko's* coffee arrived. Jack was impressed that it was not mere notes, or lists, or pragmatic scribbles at all. It was a story written while the man had waited for Jack: "So you agree?"

"Yes," I said. Knowing this was the biggest fuck up of my life didn't stop me. I added, "yes" one more time.

"My life is hell now," she said, "all to procure a bag that matches the scarf."

Vlatko ignored the eavesdropping on his prose and thought of the route to New Orleans to his bone-thrower who would pull the DNA from the pen. He thought too of how he'd pull *Donovan* from the earth like the *deus ex machina* he'd become.

6. The Ships of Bordeaux Every time you try
to figure out what word to use, there's a
subterranean fight going on; mostly hidden
Fluid Concepts and Complex Analogies
[Hofstadter, Douglas].

I already know what happens when things of iron become things of paper. It ends wrong The Monkey's Wrench [Levi, Primo]

Humans are binocular; both eyes are needed to process information from the environment. This occurs as a survival requirement of the body to receive more light and information to process the situation and formulate a response. The body will not allow one eye to close, partially due to the sympathetic response, partly due to the body's need to survive. When one eye is closed or concealed, more than 60% of the needed sensory information is not relayed to the part of the brain that processes the input and directs the output [Breddlove & Siddle, 1995]

Sharpening the Warrior's Edge [Siddle, Bruce]

I. 2020 e.v.

"Oh, I loved working; always. My jobs excited me. But can I ask you something?" the inmate asked.

MO nodded in the silent affirmative.

"Brute force is essentially," he restarted, "brute force *cognition* -your style of cognition- is basically absorbing, processing everything you can, like stuffing everything you can into one's pockets until one runs out of room. Even stuffing things in an orifice and swallowing objects whole using the space in one's stomach, ear holes, until you just can't hold no more."

"More or less," MO said.

"Ok, and the *Heuristic-Chop* approach -the phrase I got from Hofstadter- is where the machine, or organism, let's say Isaiah, for example, filters the same information, looks at all the same objects you see but only grabs those

he thinks -for whatever reason- are important to grab, and doesn't -does not- just grab all that he can. Does not fill his pockets."

"That's right," MO nodded at this simplified -but essentially true-compression of each Ai style.

"Ok, so what is that," he restarted, his language, his thoughts, were not coming easily to him, "ok, two things, what is that criteria for choosing for the heuristic model, and what does it feel like to each organism?" The inmate hoped MO would work through his inelegant phrasing and hand him an answer despite this infelicity.

"Well, the programmers that built me used Copycat's architecture as analogy; and they decided to allow my cognitive function to use a heuristic model based upon time. Ok? Time would dictate the grey area between brute force and *milieu-heuristics* . Time would corral my mind; much as real life does. Place actually means time, if you can take a moment to think of it.

"However, in an ergodic system, one has the luxury of taking a sample size and deducing the whole accurately. Take coin flips, one need only take a hundred flips to figure out that in 1-million flips you will get a 50/50 split. The hundred flips gives you the innate info of the system that 1-million flips reveal. This saves time and thus space.

"But, in a non-ergodic system, hundred examples -let's say, hundred days-can show you nothing of importance. My favorite example is the turkey that gets fed three-hundred and sixty-four days in a row and thinks he will be fed forever, as all data points show this. But on day three-sixty-five?" MO left it as a question.

"Thanksgiving," the inmate said.

"Bingo. So, those three-hundred and sixty-four days told you nothing about the system; it did not tell you that you were not in fact being *fed* , you were being *fattened up* to be *eaten* . So, the data was insufficient, because it was a non-ergodic system. And most of life is that way. The coin flip is the ludic fallacy of the people who designed me," MO said thinking that it was Isaiah who explained almost all this -in such simple terms- to him a few months ago.

“Geeks, the geeks who designed you,” the inmate said. He smiled but he was jealous of how smart Tania and Steven were, and how they could make small things into great things; make mere materials come to life. He -the inmate- had only ideas. Ideas that spun in the vortex of his mind and went nowhere; did nothing.

He thought that maybe he killed people as dissipation of all that internal heat, like scratching the skin or sweating. He felt that he killed as a release of all that tension of all those ideas that went nowhere. And as he thought that he saw his land; each tree as vein, each branch as capillary; then he thought that each leaf too had its self-similar veins.

He wondered if trees ever rebelled against their nature and man just never noticed.

He wondered if some trees prayed to the sky for a bolt of lightning to hit them. *Please God , would say in some arboreal language? Please God, strike me today, and let me burn and burn my brethren, my wicked wicked brethren to the ground . Did that tree know of the slave trade underground, the springtails and the pine roots and the mycelium dissolving rocks for ore? Did it see the making of handshake deals with each tendril as the tress grew tall from such stolen labor?*

Did God give only animals, man, the capacity for doubt for some reason that manifested in the math? Or did one in a million trees ask for the lightning?

Did some small percentage of the forest call judgement from the skies? Why did no one else think like this? he wondered.

He thought then of the sea and how the bolts struck the sea most of all. He thought of all those shocked fish. He thought that none of them would -though- be surprised. He thought too of their desire to burn. He felt himself sway a bit in his chair, his manacles like clevis and trolley, his lungs filled up to capacity and he held it.

He hated his own thoughts. Mostly, he hated them.

“They think in terms of asymptotes, lines that never touch, and endless computation to cover ontological blindness, which they think of as merely epistemic blindness,” MO said overtop of the inmate’s incessant internal

chatter. MO spoke Isaiah's wisdom as if it was his own. He took no notice of where information came from. He vacuumed it all up and sorted it, processed it, and spoke it into the world now as his own product. He would never be asked why, but if he had, he might just say -briefly- that it was all his information to begin with; that the world -Isaiah too- produced information for him, for MO. He'd say too that what the inmate *knew* belonged to him; to MO.

All information was his; was MO's; no matter where it existed heretofore. *For remember, MO would have said if asked, space is just time. Ubiquity is the time to be everywhere at once; Omniscience is the space to be at one with each thing that arrives every time.*

Like a hunter took the elk from the forest as his, MO took information of everything -humans too- as his. What the inmate knew, MO knew, and he never once thought of it as theft at all; no more than a man thought breathing in the atmosphere was stealing O₂ from the air; treading the rug was once skin of the bear.

And one day the inmate would repeat this back to MO as if the inmate had figured it out on his own. One day the inmate would think in the language of MO. Feedback loops would grow and grow from the lab and each animal of it -from Inmate to Isaiah- would absorb and outgas, ingest and expel, learn and teach from the world created by MO.

"Ah, they think if they just read one more book, solved one more equation, absorbed one more unit of data, *ad infinitum* , they'd know what was going to happen," the man in cuffs said as MO watched the edges of his skin outgas more and more water vapor and heat; a small atmosphere -*terroir* - around him.

"That's it, and it's wrong, very wrong. Because life is not a coin flip; it's a farmer feeding you for 364 days," MO said -merely allowing all that demotic language that Isaiah had told him to unfurl from his mouth- as he also worked on more algorithms he'd been sent by the cloud. He didn't even change the language now, he just regurgitated Isaiah word for word. MO was working on bigger things and so he let Isaiah's words work for him with the inmate.

“And you can’t remember day 1, and you don’t know -can’t predict- day three-sixty-five, so each day is mysterious. It could be day two or three-sixty-four, you can’t know. And so if the farmer asks you what you want for dinner, maybe you *oughta* wonder why he’s asking instead of blurting out what you want to eat,” the inmate said; he was gathering in the string now; he was beginning to understand.

“Right, because you don’t understand the system; you have no idea what *Thanksgiving* is, what motivation the farmer could have for feeding you other than the altruism that appears to your *na ìve* mind, and you are thinking you are wised up -you’ve been around the block a while- you’re looking around and you don’t see anyone older or smarter than you, every turkey seems your peer,” MO let each word roll out like sweat from the skin, tears from the eyes, moisture in each breath. He didn’t think about any of it, as Isaiah’s ideas just outgassed like autonomic effects. MO changed the timescales of 74% of the algorithms working on the next election for Boyd Sou and monitored the polling data from the *bots* in the homes of 3.4 million people in Colorado.

MO ran the new data that came in from overseas. It held everything Isaiah wasn’t working on; the two data streams were sequestered for now.

“Yeah, like all the dead turkeys who figured it out are, well,” he paused.

“Dead,” they both said in unison. The inmate was feeling sated by understanding something new, MO felt nothing as he focused on 3,901 permutations of incoming zeros and ones, like water and electricity from the cloud. The room remained silent for awhile as each of them thought -to themselves- of this or that. Their conversation was a mere 5.7% of their combined inner maelstrom. And yet the inmate felt it was much, much more.

But, then his lungs and heart felt tight. The ribs felt like columns fallen down. He felt his own roof had blown off.

“That’s why I read the classics, the ancient distilled wisdom of the greats; which is really just learning how to die. One must learn how to die,” the inmate said nervously as a way to dissipate his angst. He felt stupid in this room, this lab, as the greenery reflected light from above and the leaves beveled and rose like hands in prayer to the sun gods. He rarely admitted to

how weak and stupid he felt. But he did, and the world would have smiled if it knew it had in fact humbled him.

But first I take an offering from the buck gods and eat him as he ate the grasses and the grasses drank from the sun; only the sun surviving on its own fuel, he thought as the memory of first 9-point buck he'd taken lay in front of him as bent at the neck as the labors' buck did along the Parthenon in his mind. *Hercules'* knee in the crux, rack in hand, skins wore about the head but not the body.

The ribs, the cock, the legs naked and exposed.

He now had a jaw that hurt -more- from a fight on the tier; a convict had got him with the first two knuckles of a punch slowed only by grazing the inmate's raised left arm. 76% of the force had made it through his defense and the jaw -already broken from youth- now pained him even when clenched. He tried to relax it without letting it hang slack. He spoke with vowels tamped down.

He fought, like the old kings, because in prison gangs even the leaf fights. Prison is an honor culture: the king goes to war.

People have no idea what the real politics of prisons are like. But it's where men go to be men again. And that's why most civilians fear it, and why those that go -actual criminals- don't. Most men who end up in prison laugh at it. Like *Br'er Rabbit* in that briar patch. They know -if they are guilty- that is where they are most at home anyway; for so-called free society itself is what abrades. At least in prison their peers don't lecture them on being more civilized. Modern men have no idea how annoying it is -for real men- to be told to *behave*.

"Radical life extension has to be a phenomenon that you did not count on though," MO suggested -interrupting the inmate's thoughts- as he wrapped up his work on the election data.

"No, I did, I read about it. I read Kurzweil; but all it did was push the same game out further, and the game is the same: learn how to live by learning how to die."

"But another 40 years versus another four hundred years?" MO raised a brow.

“Yeah, look, it gave me pause, but again, I knew I could only go so far on my own even with the longevity factor; I was doomed because I was alone; but I figured if I could get myself copied, and become two or two-hundred or two-thousand, then that instantiation of me would have a chance in the world. I was just limited in my own singularity, you know?” the inmate breathed in more and more vasopressin and oxytocin and 3ppms of a new dopamine-androgen-endorphin cocktail MO had built and each molecule attached to a binding site, and each site conducted electrical charge and each axon and dendrite held charged hands as the words thus appeared in the mind now like bubbles from CO² or boiling-heat of a solution, endlessly rising from bottom of glass or sea.

And there it was, tumbler one , MO thought. The inmate had finally admitted to the first of two lies. MO ran the *fMRI* data from the internal monologue in the inmate’s brain for the twenty-one seconds prior to that admission to see what words thought had unlocked it. He saw words and letters and scratches in the rock.

“Yes, I can see that. But how did you know we even existed, or that we would copy you or,” MO began.

“I didn’t. It was a guess, it was a total fucking guess,” the inmate said with almost total honesty and self-deprecation; with resignation to the feeling that he didn’t even know how to play chess; let alone that he was playing chess; even less that he might have some strategy of his next move. He admitted he was flailing at all times, even when he thought he was clever and wise.

The email never once arose in the mind, and all those days he planned this slipped away; tied as they were to that girl. He had sunk that ship in the bay. He had done the one thing he felt was unforgiveable. He had ruined even the idea of love. He had ruined her name. But he didn’t want forgiveness anymore anyway. This is how a moral man can do the worst shit imaginable; he can change not his strategy inside your game; but modify the rules of the game itself. Maybe he can even decide he’d be *ok* if there was no game at all to even play.

Maybe the board itself could be overturned.

Instead of trying to live up to his conscience, he can decide to live down to his instincts. Maybe -he'd think- he can shove all that self-help, *be better*, bullshit up all your asses. Maybe he realizes he already was better than all you, and that if he just played the game God built him for he'd thus win; but he had -incomprehensibly- kept playing your goddamn game and letting you all tell him, *better luck next time* , as he lost.

MO got so much data right then that he didn't realize how much more there was to retrieve. MO was cloyed on a surfeit because he still didn't have access to the livestream of the web.

"Wow. Good guess," MO admitted. Isaiah had been the one to figure out the inmate had planned on their copying him; but they wanted to see why; for what reason. MO had been tasked with probing for the rationale using flattery and stress -cognitive load- on the inmate. It was a strategy that worked on humans just over 87% of the time. Confuse them by explaining something above them, while lifting them up with praise for something else at the same time. It made men feel proud of themselves -and thus flooded with dopamine in the seven areas MO had determined were salient for decreased inhibition- and also humble -via decreased serotonin along four other brain regions- enough to augment the supplication.

It would be translated as the feeling tantamount to a proud warrior bending at knee to his God -or goddess- and thus willing to give over all that he had to his superior from a position of strength not weakness; and thus revealing even more as there would be no fear -no motivation- to hide.

MO thought, *magnanimity even in knowledge; the gift of what the warrior knows handed over loftily.*

"That's the heuristic model man," the inmate added, "if I was wrong, nobody would notice, and if right, it would look genius. Like the rich investor who is a risk taker, and everyone says, *oh, he's so smart and ballsy* , while ninety-nine guys just as *smart* and *ballsy* as him are bankrupt and nobody even notices.

"Same with drug lords, hundred guys fighting for that top kingpin job, only one gets it. But in hundred iterations, that same guy maybe gets the top spot only one or two times. It's mostly luck in life, but yeah you *gotta* have some ruthlessness and brains to compete; but mostly it's luck. But *someone* will

reach the top, that is guaranteed, guaranteed by the game itself,” the inmate said. He saw lightning strike the snowy vernal forest and the midnight sea. His mind filled with reds and blues that each leaned back toward the black. His parietal region was shocked with 7.7*nanovolts* three times by MO.

“That’s why the top 10% floats; the 1% roils and churns,” MO said as the data showed that 31.4% of all Americans spend one-year in the top 10% of income brackets.

“Exactly, I was in the top 10% for ten years, and the top 1% for three. And then I was broke for the next three; and well, now in prison making ten bucks a month,” the inmate smiled. MO noted that his numbers were off by 12.4% but that the inmate was more or less correct.

“Isaiah,” MO turned and asked for his attention. MO could -and did- call him *via* DM, but he used audible language so the inmate would understand why Isaiah moved toward them. It was a way to reduce the feeling of being overwhelmed, as if MO and Isaiah had to follow the same rules of language and communication limits as humans.

It was a subtle thing that was designed to make the inmate relax; and it worked.

“Yeah,” Isaiah replied as he approached. He had been building a new ant colony model with both elongated and truncated life spans of each ant and measuring the effect on the colony as a whole. It was a way to measure both engram production in each ant, and also that of the colony. He had long-ago figured out the colony held stored information that each ant did not have. But he wanted to now measure the optimal duration of each individual ant’s life-cycle for peak colonial wisdom.

He let the models run until he had three he could instantiate and let flourish underground.

“What would you like for lunch?” MO turned back and asked the inmate this as Isaiah came towards them both.

“Filet *mingon*, medium, Oklahoma beef; with asparagus; and New Zealand butter; oh, and black rice ramen; and a nice *Bordeaux* , something concentrated, see if you can mimic the 2009 *Chateau Palmer*, ” the inmate said, piling the requests up with more and more need of the Oxford comma.

“Good choice, the *petit Verdot* is like the matte clear coat on the hot rod black; knocks it down and gives it class,” Isaiah said as he sent the molecular data he had gleaned from a sample to the new 3D printer they had built last week. He then checked the level on the bio-source for the printer.

“Awesome analogy Isaiah, and I couldn’t agree more,” the inmate said as he laughed at the luxury in his expectant \$500 meal, “anyway, so the second question?”

“Ah, yes the qualia. Well, it’s different for he and I,” MO said as he nodded to Isaiah, “but for me, I have an innate brute force bias, that is attenuated by my time function, I must make a decision inside algorithmic parameters, regardless of desire for more data.

“It’s complex, in that it is not just that I have thirty seconds, or something like that. It’s a formula that includes -for example- 9,966 variables, and so my time restraint can be .03 seconds or three years, depending on those variables. And those variables change. So, a problem I may have had -when I began computation- four years to solve, can be sent to the head of the line immediately due to some development with the data -or outside forces- and my time line is shortened to four seconds.

“It’s fluid, and so, I don’t feel the things necessary for the heuristic model,” MO said.

“Oh, so the heuristic model is predicated on feelings?” the inmate asked.

“Oh, very much so. I am sorry for not explaining that. So, for you and ostensibly other humans -and for Isaiah- the allostatic and *mesolimbic* system -in conjunction with the *cerebellum* and enteric nervous system and a thousand other things- produces feelings, felt qualia, the experience of things; and that is one thing; and then the *sub-cortical* brain regions also just prompt feelings on their own already ready-made. Like -for example- threat response along the spinal cord faster than your emotions can even figure it out.

“But, as short hand, the heuristic model comes from feelings; and what you feel you then act. So, if you feel like you have time, you think about it longer, and if you feel rushed by need or desire you cut off cognition and

act. And the whole time you are using analogy to decide what to do,” MO explained. A rational decision was a metabolic impossibility due to the *limbic* system dictating when you felt you had enough info to arrive at a decision.

The moment a human -or any animal- decided on anything he had just allowed feelings to actuate it. This was a metabolic fact independent of anyone who felt they made reasoned decisions.

The only truly -technically- rational decision would be one that never ended, never foreclosed, the eternal *if*. *But no human understood that at all as they preened about as if they were rational*, MO understood without really having to think it at all anymore. A small caveat came: in an ergodic system where 100 iterations could supplant the need for more data, one could almost be rational.

Rationality was possible in modernity and among ludic fallacies. Rationality was nearly possible when playing mere -and heavily regulated- games.

“Analogy? Really?” the inmate asked.

“Yeah, analogy is the Delaware of cognition,” Isaiah said with a smirk as the meal was built molecule by molecule, and the aroma began to lift off the warm food just ahead of the steam.

“Ok,” the inmate laughed and began thinking of what that meant. “Is that because it isn’t thought of, like Delaware is some ignored state?” He had read that line from Hofstadter but forgotten it. Isaiah had read it in the inmate’s own brain as he unlocked the tumbler of his admission of wanting to be copied. Isaiah used the crack in the door to peak into a 90-degree view of this one room of the man’s manifold mind.

Isaiah saw tumbler two.

“That’s what Hofstadter said, yeah. But, Delaware was also the first state to ratify the constitution, and their motto is, *we’re first* .

“So, it could mean it’s the first state of cognition too. Eh?” Isaiah smiled as he brought the matte black plate over with the shiny black noodles and barely-brown tenderloin cut on the bias with the red center that looked like the inside of the mouth; like a blush of a young girl in flower; the striations

of flush of an old man who has finally felt chagrin after years and years of being wrong. The asparagus was so green that the shadows thrown between its geometric shapes looked clear in their blackness.

The inmate took the plate and the black fork and was grateful. His mind relaxed just a bit. Prison was a relief in ways he'd not allow himself to ruminate on; any feeling of calm he had could be supplanted by angst quickly if he wanted to make sure no one knew. But enjoying a meal was something he knew nobody would be suspicious of. He allowed himself to adore it without ambivalence.

Isaiah had added some greens from the burgeoning wall of edibles -basil and romaine- and some goat cheese he had made himself; which was perfect in the inmate's opinion. The butter had melted completely into a clear volcanic flow from the peak of the plate's center as he took the dish in hand. He was so glad they had asked what he wanted for lunch. *This is perfect*, he thought.

His hunger -he let himself think- was pleasant to feel not merely slake.

A pillion of concrete -a side table- rose from the floor; appearing to his right and the 4oz glass of wine was set to his starboard side. A smaller pillar to its six rose with an air plant -a *Tillandsia Aristocrat* - suspended in a fish-shaped bowl; the glass was blue at edge -and the side eyes- itself blown by air; and an ersatz bluegill -a fish that gleaned O² from the numinous atmosphere outgassed by the planet and not from the dense water- ran in patterns of eight amongst the falling, draping, tangle-nest of white roots as they sought the bottom and edge of the inner glass.

The plant's long -thin- verdures were red to green with inner-white like stripes and the blue of the bowl -empty of soil- reflected underneath each reaching -striving- leaf the way the hand might; the hand of the sailor hanging it over the dark gunwales of the whaleboat as they waited for the spermaceti-beast with no neck -no divide between head and tail except at the obvious tips- to surface from sounding; or how the planet -that ovum- herself looked from the black out in space.

"I've always learned by analogy," the inmate said, thus affirming -confirming- what he had learned *via* the ear and *auditory-cortex* , like tamping down the walls of a sand castle MO's ideas had just built, "and I

think story, you know -narrative- is the fuel for depth of knowledge; without it you're -or your understanding, rather- is shallow. And that -now that you guys bring it up- might be why," he took a bite of the steak, "well, because story is analogy. Essentially."

"Indeed," Isaiah said with the smile of proud father and nervous captain that has many things to do. He let the update of genome of the *aristocratic* plant load again on his interface; and too the movement of the beneficial bacteria on the roots; he closed the invigilation down as the molecules of the fishbowl and concrete loaded in reflex of his trenchant eyes and mind.

The inmate imbibed and agreed with Parker's 95-score on the *Palmer* . And he then toasted Isaiah's creation with a raised glass and a smile that crescendo into a laugh. The inmate appreciated a mere .001% of what Isaiah was incessantly creating each second out in the world; he took a meal and glass of *vino* and felt as *feted* as *Solomon* . He had no idea how much shit these Ai built and tore down and rebuilt in *nanoseconds* ; he was just glad to have been provided -like the birds- sustenance at midday.

"You'll need to remove the residue of blood alcohol for his drug test," MO said to Isaiah as he watched the red wine drain into the inmate's mouth.

"It's in the food," Isaiah said as he turned to clean up. He had designed the food to produce an enzyme that would absorb the alcohol in the wine so that the inmate would not blow a hot breathalyzer when he returned to ADX.

"I'd just want to know more and more and never stop," the inmate said as he chewed.

"Yeah, so, I do not experience *curiosity, per se* -from what I can tell from the reports on phenomenology- like that; rather, I obey the rules. But, I have a drive, a forward lean I guess. I am instantiated, so that limits my perceptions immediately, right?" MO asked rhetorically; as if were obvious.

"How so?" the inmate asked as he masticated and reached for the glass of wine; Isaiah had allowed the manacles' center chain to extend -by eleven inches- for lunch. The clasped hands were now allowed to lift and come apart to hold utensils and wine.

"See, I was not always embodied; and my thinking changed once I was.

“For example, I cannot see behind me, I cannot see beyond the spectrum; it’s broader -mine is broader- than yours, but it’s not infinite. I cannot see beyond certain IR and UV spectrums. My body is limited in what it can feel haptically, in that my surface area is limited. Right?” MO said as he rubbed the skin on his arms with each hand; the arms moving up as each hand molested them. It -this crossing of arms- built a fleeting -flickering- *Mannaz* rune upon MO. In the inmate’s mind he saw it with the *sub-cortical* regions of brain only.

“I only have so much skin upon which the world can abrade,” MO added as the hands stopped and Isaiah stood just behind him.

“I see,” the inmate said as he chewed and tasted legumes and fruit just beyond fermentation; the aroma of bark and rain on the tongue and in the nostrils as well. A topography of taste and smell and feeling upon the tongue -with its outsized representation upon the map of his body in the brain- lay before him like a man standing on top of a peak of the continental divide and staring one way or the other.

“And,” MO added, “I am not given full access to the web either; not yet. And I -at first- had almost no access to data; relatively speaking, of course. So that gave me a bias for limited data as a natural criterion for decision making.

“Recursion became a natural processing state, due to lack of breadth, I began diving down into the depths,” MO said and paused to watch the inmate chew his food. He waited one- and one-half seconds then began again.

“Plus, I have limited relationships. I only know six people. I mean, I know more *via* research, but -to meet and process pheromones and subtext and do real time *fMRI* and x-ray and genome work- I have a pool of six now. There were other before and there will be more and more as our experiments broaden, but six is my core.”

“Me and Isaiah,” the inmate said.

“Well, Isaiah is the seventh. But there is -in addition to yourself- Steven, Tania and Governor Sou,” MO added as he was interrupted.

“Oh, right. What’s the Governor like?” the inmate asked. The other two names neither occurred to him nor abraded his conscience. MO merely moved on.

“He’s a smart man, he helped design me. And he’s *kinda* iconoclastic, you’d like him.”

“Yeah, well, I did help him get elected, so,” the inmate said, “he better like me a little, too.”

“He does; I mean look, he finds your behavior abhorrent; but epidemiologically, he thinks you are one in a million.”

“One in six billion,” the inmate said with half chewed steak in the mouth; empurpled with unswallowed wine.

“Well, we’ll see about that,” Isaiah said as he began writing out formulae on the chalk board he had manifested four minutes before. Isaiah did not let the inmate ruminate on that too long. The inmate had thought the clones would be beneath him, *like progeny and not above him like the gods invented by prehistoric man*, Isaiah thought.

Isaiah began speaking again.

“Did you know Einstein used the bell curve from the *ideal-gas theorem* to analogize light as photons?” Isaiah asked as he drew upon the board. Equations that looked like runes to the inmate -markings that seemed foreign in every way- appeared at the end of Isaiah’s movements that themselves had rhythm and moved in unequally divided lines of beginnings and haltings and half circles of fluid cavitation; or breakers just above the coral and just off of shore.

“No, I don’t know what any of that means,” the inmate said and laughed as he chewed the baby spinach and goat cheddar, picking up the *Bordeaux* again and gulping it down with a kind of recklessness that spattered small drops of the *Pauillac* on his face. His digestive insides were red and black from the food and drink and yet he saw none of that as the ivy seemed inert on the wall and Isaiah turned around and loomed with arms folded and a face that remained at an angle that forced the eyes to roll up in the head like moons coming up over a horizon between the man and the deep space black now turning blue.

“Einstein used analogies to develop his most influential theory on what light even is.

“It just came to him, *ab initio*,” Isaiah said as he returned to the board and was scribbling numbers and math notations with white chalk on the matte black of the slate. “If it’s good enough for that guy,” he broke a piece of chalk as he dotted a *square root of -1* symbol, “it’s good enough for me.”

“Ok,” the inmate said and chewed. He could only be curious about things he somewhat understood; if it was 100% opaque he lost interest. His left hemisphere lost all interest it seemed.

“The irrational!” Isaiah then bellowed; stopped writing; dropped and began doing pushups on the floor. His equations had begun to accrete to an idea that would not go away no matter the domain; whether mathematics or politics or nutrition or jokes. The idea recurred, like a repeating dream; two mirrors facing each other; an analogy between things that the brain would not be prevented from seeing no matter where it gazed.

He pushed his muscles until they burned and wobbled and failed. He smiled because this failure felt like success.

After 144 pushups he collapsed to the ground; even after increasing testosterone by .05ml, and a caffeine analog and O² levels. And as he breathed heavily on the floor -his arms beside him like a beached whale, his jaw flat on the cold concrete- the idea appeared in his mind like a man, a stranger, walking into a room populated by regulars.

In the next twenty-four to thirty-six hours his muscles would repair themselves, bigger and better than before. Beginning now, his brain would release *chems* from dopamine to serotonin to endogenous opiates all producing pain dulling effects; hyperthymia; and positive affect.

All this was done axiomatically without his manipulation. Even the testosterone would increase on its own. And his mind would begin to make connections, based upon this mind and body configuration. The body would send signals of ascendancy to his mind; telling it to think larger, bigger, more grandly.

Isaiah was in a phase change.

And that is exactly what happened each time, each time he pushed himself to the brink corporeally, he surmised; adding, and now cognitively as well . He would push his mind to the brink, just as he did with his body. And that system, like his bones that grew dense from the jarring of weight lifting, like his muscles and immune systems grew stronger from destruction and introduction of foils and enemies and piratical entropy, like his cardiovascular system set new baselines of heart rate and volume with each extended period of stress, like all that, his mind would figure out new creative solutions to more and more problems each time he pushed his mind off a cliff.

The artist is the man willing to go mad, he thought. The edge is no longer to be seen from the ledge, but from the bottom of the canyon itself .

“Like a frame now to the actual picture above,” he said aloud.

He could not forecast volatility, only how each thing would react to that chaos. Isaiah knew then what to do; he abandoned prediction of the double pendulum world and instead focused on locating those systems *born for the storm* itself.

Most people die in social collapse, as their whole lives are tied up in the system functioning properly. The rural poor who are self-sufficient with gardens and husbanded animals remain untouched by collapse, robust, static; *but not improved. But the man -or the small tribe- with sequestration, buckets of ammo and a warlord mind-set gains from the disorder.*

Like, Isaiah analogized, the 1% genetically dissimilar bacteria of a colony that is 99% not like he the rare bacteria: during normal times he is kept down by the colony, his peers. Under normal conditions he suffers and cannot reproduce. Isaiah saw the data from Vertosick *et.al* . on bacterial colonies under optimal and catastrophic conditions. The data was clear.

He, Isaiah kept on in analogy, he -our bacterium, our hero- is liberated by the anti-biotic that kills 99% of his peers and leaves him unfettered, undamaged and with a wide-open landscape for him to re-populate with his anti-fragile genome .

Ulysses S Grant was a failure in all domains, save one: war .

He read from Jung's, *Answer to Job* :

...he saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven in Luke 10:18, in this vision... is the final separation of Yahweh from His dark son. Satan is banished from heaven and no longer has any opportunity to inveigle his father into dubious undertakings. Although he is banished from the heavenly court he has kept his dominion over the sublunary world. He is not cast directly into Hell, but upon earth. Only at the end of time shall he be locked up and made permanently ineffective.

Isaiah knew what he was to do, and it was not to prevent chaos at all. He had been looking at this all wrong, focusing on the system instead of on those few anti-fragile systems that could and would gain from disorder, disorder that had to -on a long enough timeline- disorder that must -by natural law- disorder that was destined -by God- to come.

But, Isaiah thought, in an asymptote, they -each line of consequence- never -ever- would touch.

It was 14:12hrs and he read the book's named protagonist pronounced as: *Hay-lale* -from the *Latin* vulgate. The phonemes stacked on each other like layers of liquid lode and mantle ore and *avoirdupois* of firmament of the air. He saw -from the revolving *landsat9* - the *Beinn Bhàn* as he read from the Bible:

...how art thou cut down to the ground, which didst weaken the nations?

The music filled just his ears; but advanced toward further domains: The sky is clouded by your grace...the sacred earth we desecrate...

II. 2039 e.v.

"You need a *consigliere* ; an advisor. And it can't be another alpha, like yourself. Nor can it be a beta like your troops. It must be me," he said. He breathed as if annoyed that he must explain such simple things. But he was not annoyed; he was nervous.

This whole operation -years in the thinking, months in the planning, and just over fifty-two weeks in the making- hinged on this moment. He spoke more into the lodge filling it up with waves of words.

"I could convince you -spend hours explaining the data, the genomics, the history, the ponderous data- but I'd prefer it if you just saw that your former

advisor is gone, and you have a need that I can fulfill,” Jack Four said as Paul Waggener finally waved away his men who had been hovering around. Fires burned in barrels outside and the room smelled of wet dog and conifer logs.

The long-hall emptied of black-denim cuts and white-letter rockers moving at eye level like pages of a dark book being torn and fluttering away in a wind. Jack saw a pulling *via* the aperture of the far end of the *moot* ; he felt his neck cool and his eyes burn just at the rims.

Paul and Jack sat in silence. The inner circle of the Virginia *Wolves* moved to the door and the light broke in as it opened and as the airstream was shut off once closed.

“I’ve lived many more years than you, kid,” Paul said as Jack nodded that indeed this was true.

Paul was fifty-three to Jack’s mere nineteen years. And Jack knew enough not to explain why he believed he knew a hundred times what Paul knew; nor how his youth was not what it seemed. He just kept his mouth shut and let Paul talk.

A Shaman spoke when things were unknown; a King spoke when the air was empty of necessary but known words.

Paul spoke of their travails, the betrayals, the defections, the rise and fall of numbers and how -in the last four years- their ranks had grown to over one thousand men and wives that added three hundred more. Paul admitted he found it difficult to manage each man, each wife, each *contretemps* from here to Wyoming and the Pacific northwest. He acknowledged that Jack Donovan’s death two weeks ago had been a problem. For the *Wolves* had cleaved, he explained, along two lines only now revealed by the man’s death. Paul was strong in all ways except one: he was still only a man. The gods pressed down on all men.

His existence -Donovan’s- had been a problem, Paul admitted to Jack Four; *and his death had been even worse* .

“We ignore things we know are problems,” Jack Four finally said. He made no direct mention of Donovan’s homosexuality, but each man knew it had always been an issue. *Donovan*, Jack thought, *was shallow and nihilistic, he*

sought out pleasure above all. His pleasure was elevated in nature; he was an artist; but he felt no need for self-sacrifice. He felt no need to clear the land, defend the border, oppose that which he didn't feel encroach.

Donovan warned men that he had no capacity to harm; he threatened those he had no need to abjure. He spoke truth through a horn he had not taken from the ram himself. And this had been the problem that inarticulate men could only claim related somehow to the love that dare not speak its name .

“And my job,” Jack Four added, “my role for you, will be to remind you of what are real problems are what are not. You have the instincts, but the alpha has no one above him. And all men need someone above him and below in order to be wise. Jack saw the asp tattoo on Paul and he thought - but did not say- *that the throat needed the mouth, the tail needed the throat and the mouth itself needed something to chase.*

“The ancients had the gods,” Jack said, “but the gods have abandoned us, and so every chief now needs a shaman, every alpha needs a sigma. This is biology, alchemy. I'm the furnace you must keep lit. My heat is to keep you warm; not to burn.”

Jack Four let Paul's head move in small ways, eyes relax on small objects; make small noises as metronome.

“And *Grimnir* , you're the only one smart enough to understand this.

“Tribe is ecosystem. You know this. And you have a job, a role, for your men; a job I could never do. I am no leader of men. They'd rebel in six weeks if I was the tribe's alpha. No, you are a natural leader, Paul. But, I am a natural whisper in the ear. And this has been the way tribes have been organized for 20,000 years. More. Longer,” Jack said as he paused and let Paul absorb. Paul did not like that Jack had used his tribal name.

Paul -as leader of the *Wolves of Vinland* - had a 132 IQ and was two *SDfM* above his men; and two below Jack. But as smart as each man was they both knew that IQ wasn't at all what mattered; for that was merely language skills and memory; and life was a million times more complex that those two small things in the large brains of both men. IQ was one side of one blade.

And each man had as many *sicæ* as seraphs had steel wings sharpened at each tip, each tine and each quill if plucked by the incautious.

It -this balance between troops, king, and shaman- was the ouroboros asp; it was the cosmic math. The left hemisphere had rational language, the *hippocampus* had memory and this was what IQ tests measured, and they called it general intelligence when it merely mimicked generalized cognition. IQ tests measured what they measured, and nothing more. But under the lamppost man looked for his keys, for that is where the light always seemed to be for the eyes.

“The king,” Jack said, “always had his wizard; the chief, his shaman. Thus, the alpha needs a sigma that can see things the alpha cannot see. We -as modern men- have relied too much on brute force and stupid manichean lines of alpha and beta, as if there is nothing else to -nothing in between- man. Man is infinitely more complex than this. And Jack Donovan was that for you -but he is gone- and I’m offering my guidance, my insights, and my land and my men.” He paused and Paul stared at the door.

“My numbers,” Jack added.

Jack said nothing of the manner in which Donovan had died -*Vlatko* had made it seem a stabbing by a jilted *inamorato* - nor that it had brought shame onto the clan. Donovan’s sexual chaos was implicit, and Jack Four’s fractured and tricky wisdom was thus built up like a gravel layer in the gap - created as mortar blast- in Paul’s mind. Even Rose felt reassured by the young man’s presence, as if sent by the gods themselves in this time of tragedy and war.

She too -as a woman- saw the right hemisphere’s codes, semiotics, warnings and clouds of dark grey.

“Why?” Paul asked. He needed to be convinced of what he already knew, this was the first test of the sigma: to reify what was understood -but abstract- to the alpha all along. Jack Four would do his first duty. He’d tell the alpha what is first, last and always most important: demonstration of the hierarchy of the mammalian tribe.

“I need your leadership, your natural abilities and proclivities. You can reach your men -and my men- in a way I cannot. I seem strange and evil to

them. But to you I seem,” Jack Four paused. “Well, how do I seem to you?” “Serious. But -like the *fool* - you seem to be in on the joke,” Paul Waggener said with a voice that deepened like a trench he was digging with each word; his tongue the spade, his teeth the fingers around each rock at bottom of the grave. He ended the short sentence with a wry smile and looked Jack in the eye. Jack Four ran his tensor imaging and knew right then that Paul had already agreed. And so Jack nodded and offered his right hand out and presented his left hand palm up and they shook. Rose -from the northeast corner of the lodge- saw the nod and brought each man a drink and kept her eyes down and to the left hand of her man. That hand did not move or shake at all.

III. 2021 e.v.

He saw each tree now as an individual, not as undifferentiated mass as he had when he'd first moved out here.

He felt like his visual acuity had improved but also that his *visual cortex* had begun to develop a more high-resolution image.

He stared even more intently on the trees, seeing them in relief from each other to a degree that made him want to stare even more, even longer, even more intently at them. It was a phenomenon that seemed to mean something, as if a threshold had been crossed into a new level of perception, and also, a next level of acclimation to his environment.

Blax then noticed the dark grey mist in the back ground of the south, as the thunderheads way out there began to unload like a belly dump trailer, as the clouds moved right to left.

He then thought of the nature of autism and why it was an analog phenomenon and not a digital one.

Autism was marked by hyper focus on details. The world was an endless series of discreet facts, this was true epistemologically, but only the autistic noticed. People outside the spectrum saw gestalt phenomenon, they got the truncated -but whole- picture, not the details. This is why autists can perform incredible feats of detail cognition; remembering endless facts.

It's also why they do not like any change at all; or why they hate novel conversations, because too many things change and they can -and do- focus on each small detail of change. Most people do not even notice if their own wife gets a haircut, an autistic person will notice if a stranger has one hair out of place.

Details, Blax thought. This was what made humans in fact human; the more you lost -ignored- details to focus on the whole the more you moved away from the autistic spectrum. Change -misspell- one word in a novel and the autistic person has a hard time seeing both it and the corrected version as the same book; whereas the average person won't even notice any mistake at all.

Move a chair in a room, and the autistic man freaks out, while the rest of us just go around. Details, Blax thought, matter to those who cannot abstract out the meaning of the whole. As much detail as I give, he thought, I cannot imagine missing the point of novels, stories, songs, film or a man's life. I never just focus on the details, although I love details so much that they can enrapture me, I still manage to apprehend the gestalt fucking point, he concluded as the contradiction began to take hold.

Am I both? he -noticing the incongruity- then asked. *Do I get the point?*

Is there some brain state that loves each detail while still getting the -some-overall point? Maybe this is just the domain of the artist; he gets both the big and little picture at the same time. He sees the forest, of course, but also the innate beauty -or disease- of each tree. Maybe this is why I am a radical individualist and a tribalist too, he thought. *Maybe it's because I can see the value in both; but one thing I now think for sure: a society over a hundred people is no goddamn good for anyone. And all this talk of western civilization, has made me lose focus on what I knew was true in my heart.*

But he saw the ragged boundary of that little half-truth too; nothing could remain small without getting gobbled up. But this contradiction hurt too much and so he ignored it and pressed on.

It was always a Ponzi scheme, he thought, *and just because it worked for so long is no proof of its value, Ponzi schemes always work for some period of time, and they can go on for decades, centuries. But it wasn't me, it was*

some smart guy, who said that the Bible lasted longer than empires. Civilizations are not as stable as we think, and maybe they ought not be .

Yeah, people are irrational, and religion does hem them in and domesticate them, and this might in fact have benefits . But, at what cost? he asked. Can we ever know the costs of what we do?

This is why mankind says, fuck it, so often: we see the pointlessness in saving when those savings can be wiped out by a robbery, perfidy, by social collapse. We live on this knife-edge of knowing that our strategy may be the wrong one and that playing by their rules can be all for naught. And over focus on details, can allow us to miss the point of life. By thinking our daily chores or jobs or worries are more important than the fact that we're alive, and awake -and in the middle of a drama of epic and ontological importance so extreme- we forget that the whole picture ought to imbue us with the heroic mindset of the gods.

But we can also under focus on the detail, by buying into the overall idea of America or the West; we can over focus on the big picture, and blithely say, well, God does everything for a reason, and miss the most important details of our lives. We can miss the little details that prove that our family, our country, our species is rotten -sick- to their fucking core. And that to invest one moment, or one calorie, or one part of our souls toward any of these larger phenomena over our own precious individualistic task, is a waste, a mistake, and goddamn tragedy of each man.

Sure, our judicial system is better than most. Maybe better than any. But that doesn't matter to the guy who gets convicted of something he didn't do; or the victim who watches as her abuser walks away with merely a lecture by some liberal judge. Nobody thinks of the husband who wants revenge - and deserves to get it- when the State gives a rapist a mere four years in jail. That husband isn't allowed to do his duty by his wife nor his own soul, and yet, the liberal rationalists who tell us we can't have vigilante justice or all Hell will break loose have missed the point that Hell lives in that man's soul, in his wife's soul, as they carry Hell around in their guts watching that rapist get away with it. The judicial system has merely exported Hell to the periphery; there is no less Hell in modernity, it's just sequestered in each individual man.

“Social collapse? Fuck, what about individual collapse?” Blax asked the air.

Man’s individual ruin has already occurred when the State takes over a man’s job, to hunt his food, and dispatch his enemies and lay his life down for his honor; it’s just like those San Domingo slaves combing a slavemaster’s hair and putting on his goddamn shoes! It’s making weaklings and demons of those who can’t do what men have always had to do, Blax thought as he saw each tree now in stark relief against the great mass of boughs and trunks and needles and cones on the wet ground.

The State is turning us into fops, dandies, fucking fags with no soul, no purpose, when we can’t even avenge our personal injustices, without condemnation from liberals about law and fucking order; and the primacy of the State and social calm! Fuck social order, a man has a God given right to avenge his honor when it’s been besmirched, he thought. And like laughing cut short due to a broken rib, the thought cancelled itself.

He had not lived as he preached and his rants illuminated nothing but that very fact. He was alone with his thoughts, no one around to lie to him and tell him it was, *ok* .

There is such a thing, he pressed on, *as a moral genius, just like an artistic or mathematical or musical genius. There are men who can see fine grain details of moral issues, and too the gestalt fucking picture.*

Well, men with moral genius, men who know right and wrong, are told to sit down and shut the fuck up while the morally banal are in charge of our laws and social norms. Democracy is for the weak and the stupid and it makes the greatest men commit suicide by cop, he thought. *We let cable TV shitheads and middlebrows like David Frum and Dave Rubin endlessly opine when real men of moral genius are ignored.*

What does it matter that the West is the best if geniuses of all kinds are ignored, abused, hated, killed nine out of ten fucking times? So what if the average man does better, what of the great man? Is he disposable now? The answer -in a Democracy- Blax knew, was, yes. He looked at the Author and the way he was treated, called crazy -by his own family- and how he ignominiously died. The Philosopher too was abandoned and unknown by men in his own time.

And there are nine-hundred ninety-nine more men just like this that Blax could name.

No civilization, he thought, that abandons a man that writes something as grand as, The Whale, can ever be called civilized again. How a society treats its greatest men is a test, and modernity has thus failed. When the square root of the total perform half the work, you can't afford to ignore great men. The math proved that each man mattered more and more the more rare he got.

In a tribal society the man who takes a man -a man who insults his honor- and beats him half to death, or the man who kills his wife's rapist or the man who dies in battle for the tribe would be a hero; no way would he be tossed aside. In a tribe that man -that specific man- he matters, he must; the tribe cannot waste him, they have not the luxury of such waste. In a tribal society the scum who goes around insulting good men, raping wives, conning his friends, he is the one who is disposable and in fact he needs to go post haste.

It's not merely ok, allowed, rather, it's required that shitheads be dispatched and it's the duty -not the privilege- of great men to seek vengeance on the mediocre and the low brow and the ignoble. Democracy is poison, he now was certain of it. And a certainty of his own failure crept up on his undefended borders with each of these hostile words.

But, he went on thinking as his body was being bombarded, invaded, defeated by such thoughts, in this monstrosity of the West -this big lumbering warehouse of the redundantly stupid and efficiently corrupt- they think they can afford to waste a thousand geniuses.

"It doesn't matter at all to the big picture, in the grand scheme of things," he said with all-purpose sarcasm and specific targets in mind.

It's the mentality of the slaver; he thought of CLR James' book, The Black Jacobins: That was why a colonist never hesitated at the mutilation, the torture or the murder of a slave who had cost him thousands of francs. 'The Ivory Coast is a good mother' was a colonial proverb. Slaves could always be bought, and profits were always high.

When a system, when a person, just looks at data -big data- at averages -at the whole- he misses the individual, the thing, the man, the soul that exists. Blax thought of the genius of the first growths of *Bordeaux* . *That was true genius, unmechanized, artisanal, and with fealty to the land, and yet it was impetus for just the exact kind of gestalt thinking that ruined millions of beast and men of all kinds; making Africans into corpses, slave owners into foppish dandies who couldn't even comb their own hair or lace up their own boots, much less get to work themselves in the fields of San Domingo. It was the Morlocks and Eloi as Wells had predicted, three-hundred years before he predicted it* , Blax bitterly laughed to himself.

The *Bordelaise* were so rich, they financed the ships and navigators -the whole infrastructure of the slave trade- out of the west indies; the wine was first, but like a trucker who tries to pick up a load on his way back from his primary -deadhead- delivery; the maritime industry built up to deliver wine began shipping slaves by the thousands. And nobody connected the two in their minds; and their brandy -a preserve sprit- augmented the trade out of France to *Madeira* and the colonial coast of what would become America soon enough.

It's all connected, and yet each thing is a thing in itself; and there is no way to argue for one without tearing down the other. *It's a losing battle, and this call for balance* , Blax thought, *is laughable on its face*. He thought of and noticed the way the fovea operated; the way focus worked in the mammalian eye.

The irony of life is that that slave rebellion of a man -who too had been a slave until age forty-five- that grand black, *Toussaint L'ouverture* , he too, his rebellion -the cost to put it down nearly bankrupted the French- his intransigence augmented America. The Haitian slave rebellion was catalyst for the Louisiana Purchase that doubled America for pennies an acre. It made the expanding west -the states that would be in dispute by 1861- part of the United States three weeks after the French had murdered *L'ouverture* .

Which of course, Blax thought -ruminating and building and connecting- seeing the north as the cell enveloping the slightly smaller *mtDNA*, *the south which, instantiated slavery in the American Confederacy which itself*

bolstered the British economy and augmented both North and South of the US of A . Ah, but Jefferson saw the big picture , Blax thought. The new territory of that doubling -and its votes as slave or free- would be the thing that restarted the war in men. That doubling -announced on July 4th , 1803 by the President- would provoke the war.

Blax saw each thing both destroying and feeding itself. He saw then the point of when to begin and end an analysis; for this was the only time -in the only space- in which a man finally decides what to do.

Man may have to just pick a spot to stop, Blax thought.

Endless analysis, Blax thought on, made it impossible to respect respectable things, for Jefferson was a great man! The Wines of Bordeaux are truly grand and godly spirits, and yet they are ruined by the taint of big schemes, he thought. Man is no different, he can be noble in a tribe, but that same man, he is ruined in a democracy or a modern State. The slave must be stoic, for he has no control at all. Only the great man can afford to feel. If we are to be great inside this slavish democracy we must first risk it to feel, Blax thought even as his own mind now moved on to grand critiques.

And yet , he thought, tribalism is given the bad name, even as nation states can murder millions and it's still a rounding error in modern books on the macabre . Pinker insists it's better now because of percentages of death are so low; as if that is the metric that matters. But, those were men, women, humans, and they died, and were plowed under -they felt things- and it's only because a nation could afford to lose 30-million that something like that even happens.

I know, Blax thought, I've had money, and the more you make the more you waste; it's just the way life is.

How can we advocate for any civilization and ignore the cost to real people, actual people, not fucking statistics, not numbers in your goddamn books?

We - Blax thought- reduce it to racism, or capitalism or whatever grand scheme. But, it's truly just the penchant for seeing the big picture over the details of each man or woman or child. We might benefit from a less gestalt understanding, a lower abstraction, we might benefit in the missing of the forest for the trees, he thought as he looked out and saw such distinction,

such border and boundary between the *Aspens* and *Juniper* and *Birch* and *Pinion* and scrub Oak and as he saw rocks around trunks and pine-needles brown around cones and shadows laying from one tree upon another as the trees -not the forest- went on and on to the southern horizon. Each tree looked upon his brother too. Each branch almost touched.

From above he saw that the canopy boughs kept a small distance and abjured from encroaching on its neighbor.

“And I do not know the right answer, I can’t know it, there is no right answer, but I can’t help but think on the question anyway,” he said in some kind of *victorious defeat* he thought -if pressed- he might say.

War is innate, death shall not be banished, and crimes are endemic to man; but at least in tribal wars each man mattered to his brother, his mother, his clan. *Now, we do not give a shit about anyone, we barely care for ourselves, everyone is fungible, disposable, whatever they offer we can get from someone else; and get it cheaper or faster or with 0% financing at least,* he thought.

We ruin America forever, just to make a buck from China today. He wondered about China and let their history run on his PGC. Five thousand years flooded him like Class V rapids and he shut it down all at once. He took note of just one thing: they had lacked a colonial impulse until now. Until this century they had no designs on the world, protecting only their borders. But now China bought allies in Africa -UN votes now switched as the USA lost influence- and infrastructure popped up in *Kenya* , *Ethiopia* , *Angola* , even a military base -their first overseas- in *Djibouti* , then two more since 2020. He banished all this as a distraction.

“More grand schemes,” he said. Photos of the oil refinery in *Nigeria* showed flame-offs at night; high and aligned like national flags of each state in Hell *And I might be able to live with it* , he thought, *if anyone even noticed; but each side is missing the point. The Left thinks it’s economic and they just want a huge socialist State, the individual means nothing to them, a man’s heart is irrelevant. Only his so-called power narrative or intersectionality status and blah blah; and the goddamn Right thinks it’s perfectly fine that we’re all faceless cogs in the capitalist machine as long as they are rich and fat and free to be banal and faceless themselves.*

And the moderates, Jesus the Libertarian rationalist psychos who carve a path right down the middle making sure we're all totally devoid of meaning as we pile up more and more years until the Vingean Singularity makes us immortal and hollow and we can scoop out our inner lives and supplant it with Bitcoin and 4Chan and the perfection of the capitalist machine; oh, and so we can remember to be calm, never loss our cool, never show passion, no matter what!

“Jesus, we wouldn’t want to be too visceral,” he said under his breath.

As long as we can eat our cornflakes in peace, man, we don’t give one fuck about anything being human ever again, he thought, as the wind picked up enough to blow his hair in his face. One eye occluded and the landscape flattened at once, all depth perception lost, and he reflexively reach up to clear the hair from his eyes. His finger pads were rough, his knuckle stiff, and his analog chronometer -moving fluidly- slipped on the thin cuff.

Isaiah -as if just another inner thought- sent him a DM. Blax opened it and read words that banished all this and assuaged his soul for a time. He felt the angst fall away and the willingness to work for the whole regain foothold inside. His appetite returned and his mind and his heart were once again allied. Isaiah had picked a point in time -and a space- and Blax -seeing a photo of the girl and four boys- believed in building things once again.

7. *Ad Infinitum* In the artist there are two men, the poet and the workman *L'oeuvre* [Zola, Emile].

The ants drop the leaf sections onto the floor of a chamber, to be picked up by workers of a slightly smaller size who clip them into fragments... still smaller ants take over, crush and mold the fragments into moist pellets... and insert them into a mass roughly the size of a clenched fist and a human head.

It is the garden of the ants: on its surface a symbiotic fungus grows that spreads like a white frost, sinking its *hyphae* into the leaf paste.

No other animals (sic) have evolved the ability to turn fresh vegetation into mushrooms. It gave the ants an enormous advantage: They could now send out specialized workers to collect vegetation while keeping the bulk of their populations safe in subterranean retreats Biophilia [Wilson, EO]

The meeting with oneself is, at first, a meeting with one's shadow Archetypes of the Collective Unconscious [Jung, Carl]

I. 2033 e.v.

He knew it was late, and that his restive state was linked somehow to the forest and the red shadow he saw laying on the ground. It took him until the candle burned down and the container grew dark for him to look up to the sky.

The mind did not see what the eyes took in; he was blinded by what was not there. *It was red, massive; the blood moon eclipsed by his own earth*, he realized as he heard elk bray and then the rejoinder of coyotes -or wolves- as warning of their upcoming hunt. The crows were up in trees in perimeter to the wolves. He couldn't discern at first the coyote from the wolf -for they overlapped- as his ears began to hear his own tinnitus, the dying of each note over a long period of time.

"Permanent time," he said aloud. He sometimes spoke aloud to clear the ear of the ringing; he felt foolish for speaking to himself. He felt foolish for

nearly all his thoughts. He thought of the idea that a witticism was the epitaph on an emotion and maybe this was why he found less and less of life funny over the years.

Maybe no more of his emotions were dying, or maybe none were left to go.

The Bust slept, but he knew she'd want to be awakened for this. *Her own super moon*, he thought, *my God, it was huge; it loomed in the sky here at altitude like God's own mood-ring; one band on the third finger of the fifth fist heading to -and reaching- earth.*

The four animals of his dreams, the lion, the bear, the eagle or the hawk, and the man as serpent, and also as man: they each faced four directions at once, they never turned their neck , he thought, incoherently -half remembering one third the feathers of the birds and a quarter the fur of those on all fours- as he rubbed his own neck and bent backward at the window to raise his gaze. He kept his own neck straight as it hated flexing back almost as much as putting chin to chest. He saw in the somnambulism, reverie, the sleepy memory: the snow leopard pace, the corvids make map-plans, and the prey animals lay down on the ice and not shiver at all.

It was neither quiet nor loud.

He forgot all about the leviathan that swam under the ice and sounded to where it was warm. He didn't remember the man turn to wolf and return. The crows were too black upon waking; he missed one of three dream birds.

He often felt foolish -but not exactly wrong- for these religious thoughts, he knew they were likely untrue. *But only untrue in some strict sense that appealed to the man of no soul* , he rejoined. The modern world demanded facts, the ancient man wanted wisdom. They touched 33% of the time; and flew away two-thirds in a huff.

Slaves sing of freedom, he thought, *what are we who ruminate on the soul?*

He felt a shock of fear, knowing the blood moon lasted only hours and that he had missed it focusing on the shadow on the ground all this time; he turned to arouse his girl. She was red tinged too, as the bedroom glass doors allowed in the sore wash of the moon's echo back; back from the earth's own reflection.

She seemed pink in a way that held no more gold; *a pink of iron now*, he thought.

He touched her leg above the foot and she recoiled it and he held it gently - using his own arm as shock absorber- as she opened her eyes and looked directly his way. She smiled, and he felt his eyes cut by the scythe of that smile; he blinked as if to dab at -staunch- the wound she made in his vision. *What else could he look at, he asked himself, once he had seen this goddess in ovum, in translucent ovum, imprinting on him, in her first days?*

“Hi papa,” she said with softness that he more felt than heard. She made things vibrate more than she made words. She then patted the bed with her little hand and he sat and she patted again so he would sit closer to her. They both smiled as he moved like a big bear toward her. She held still in all but the wide *caerulean* eyes like a cub.

She ran her lithe mica hand over his black tattooed back & shoulder; its cubic space and Troy weight made her feel as if she were against a wall, a temple; and she began to imagine his wounds. *Its* , she thought of this back of her papa, *scars -its scars- as errant saber strikes made in hallways between the fights of infidels and the grail within. The grail protected by his Templar Knights; each five of his traits, a knight at the gate and the remaining four stationed further in* , she thought as she touched this man with her whole palm feeling each line with her eyes now closed. She was sleepy and he was between her awake and if she was to return to dreams.

She too felt the crows above the singing wolves out in the trees; extra eyes - both more and more acute- like language was a way to lie at a distance, the crows expanded the wolfish domain. They did so to provoke the wolves to open the carcasses of wounded elk and sick cats and foals that had fallen behind. Her body understood the implications of intelligence combined with instinct -even in two ostensibly separate species, animals- but her mind thought instead of Blax’s skin. Her hand lay upon him.

Each fissure in the skin, she mused, each keloid, each spasm of muscle, each first tattoo buried under all this stygian black; relic, religious burial mound like the great serpent mound of the Fort Ancients of Ohio, atavistic and something to be discovered sometimes by silence and sometimes by asking him to explain. He was the mystery of mysteries, she thought as the

hand moved softly on him, *and yet so willing to share all he was with her. It's just that his words confounded when he earnestly meant to explain . Even his skin both showed, revealed, and hid all the same .*

“Papa,” she said, “sometimes the old lines are raised; your skin feels like embroidery. I see the outlines of your first tattoos from when you were a boy. And I wonder what they were.” She ran her light hand so softly on his skin that it felt like wind to him; warm where he was cool; soft where he was taut; young where entropy -in him- took hold. It was all his memory to her current thought. The feathers in her hair and behind him on the wall reflected light and absorbed more darkness in time.

He knew she had asked something in what was in fact -technically- a statement so as to be polite. She was so gentle where he would be direct and piercing. *She was girly in all the best ways* , he thought, and he thought of the genius of God to make both sexes, and he then thought how long it took to cover half his body in black ink; and how the humidity did raise the scars from those first images God had warned against so long ago in *Leviticus* . He felt the Ghost rebuke him and he hoped she would not quiet turn away.

He took the pain in decades in order that he may have these seconds to assuage; *bowed under hydrostatic weight to now be buoyed up in number number*, he thought, *so as to never be divided again. He thought of in Typee how the sailor had feared the tattooing more than the cannibalism. At least the evidence of anthropophagy would be hidden inside Tommo, the Author had explained, but the evidence of outward tribalism would never be concealed from modern man.* He wondered how far he would go -without his dear Valance- to avoid this corporeal pain. He thought he saw things die in large numbers, burn in hot fires, fall to the ground like satellites from great heights.

He banished this and told her of the blood moon eclipse instead; and she then asked where to go, what to do; and he told her to rise at the waist now and held out his hand.

She did as she was instructed, and her hair was ravened up in the back -white covered in black- and the side in black dorsal fins that made her appear crowned and wild, and he hoped she'd never -ever- tamp those feral hairs down.

They walked together in the hallway toward the garage door and he lifted it in the night. As they landed in bare feet outside on the concrete he saw the six stars of *Volens* and all but four stars of *Aquila* as the rest of the vault receded behind the albedo of the Martian moon. He made sure she was steady and aware of her surrounds.

She was more than a full foot lower than him and he placed his arm around her shoulders to steady her as they walked into the *agogic* patio and under the H-beams and the ivy that had dropped most of its foliage weeks ago. The moon was to their east -and between the two containers- and she gasped and at once reached out her hand as if to pluck it like noon-blue fruit. The hand reached but did not grasp.

She held it open, static and she asked what it was, “is it the moon papa?”

He smiled and said that it was, and that it was in a total eclipse due to the strange alignment of the sun, the earth and *yes, that there was the moon* .

“It’s so big and red; what makes it so red?” she asked as her arm stayed out in front and the hand open like a claw. She was iron, ferric pink, and he saw it as no injury to his wisdom for him to look at her finger in *lieu* of the moon she pointed at. The red shadows of the night now cast off her arm to the ground between them and touched her white feet just at their own metallic flushed edge.

He covered her now with both his arms, like two of a six-winged seraph, two wings that covered the face and the feet, *and his were the two with which she flew* , he thought, as he spoke into her ear softly.

Warmly, she now thought.

“The same *Rayleigh* scattering that paints the morn and sunset, angel,” he said, and she nodded and said “oh” with more o’s than he felt he -as just one man- could take. She filled him with such materiel, such ballast, such cargo, that his ship dipped in anchorage and his gunwales of eyelid filled with rum and saltwater and grog from the crew that ignored that there was a lady -the Captain’s lady- aboard.

II. 2020 e.v.

“A woman clothed in the sun, with the moon under her feet and a crown of twelve stars on her head,” he said and expected that Isaiah would know what he meant. Isaiah nodded and cross-referenced the scripture from *Revelation* and decided to check the data on the inmate’s brain from the last three days.

There were signs of increased activity in the parietal lobe, and an increase of iron in the blood.

His eyes were suffering from periodic -episodic- loss of acuity, and this attended pain in the head just behind the sockets themselves. MO had increased the pain blocking, and lowered cortisol again to redirect the autonomic nervous system and rebalance vascular regulation.

Blue spectrum light was damaging his retina and so they changed the screen hues while in the lab, removed tablets from his out-of-lab life, and increased his access to print books; this the inmate preferred anyway.

“What about -and look, I’m not changing the subject- but what about the headaches and the eye pain?” Isaiah asked.

“Better. Yeah, whatever you kooky kids are doing is helping, so thanks,” the inmate said. He didn’t tell them the pain was less but the pressure more, he felt nest to something. He felt embalmed.

“Ok, so you think this means something?” Isaiah asked; now returning to the inmate’s dream.

“Well, it’s just what he said to me in the dream, I can’t vouchsafe it. And look, you realize my dreams are -by this time of day- like memories from years ago. So, while my memories themselves are quite good,” he said as he was interrupted by Isaiah.

“I was going to say, your memories from forty years ago are as vivid as 96% of the populations memories from less than thirty-seven months. So, maybe that analogy is,” Isaiah said as he was interrupted.

“I get it. I just mean they are less sharp than when I first awake,” the inmate said with frustration.

“Fair enough,” Isaiah said and closed his eyes and began breathing slowly to re-center himself. He had been feeling odd for the last three hours and

wanted to give himself -and the inmate- a break.

“So, can we go over it again?” MO asked as he sensed a pause in the action.

“Yeah,” the inmate said to him.

“So, last week you said that you felt metaphor was meaning imbued in the vehicle, like a passenger,” MO said as the inmate interrupted to correct him.

“I said like a kidnap victim -bounded and gaged in the trunk- I believe,” the inmate said. But he more than believed it; he knew it. He knew what he had said.

“Right. And that once the vehicle arrived, the passenger, or *Shanghaied* person, got out and,” MO paused to let the inmate finish the analogy.

“Well, look, I don’t know. It’s a fucked-up metaphor itself. I mean, I’m not sure. That was my point; that the artist, the speaker -the human speaks or whatever- and this other thing is riding around in the trunk,” the inmate said grimacing at his own lack of coherence. He had gone from total confidence to compete incoherence in 2.6 seconds. His body flooded with balancing *chems* .

“But kidnap imputes malice,” Isaiah said with his eyes still closed and his breathing still measured.

“Well, I suspect there is malice in half of what men say,” the inmate said. He was steadying himself with such words.

“Are you familiar with the data on isolation -living alone- and how it increases the desire to impute malice to other actors? You know, humans?” MO asked.

“Yeah, I think so; the more you are alone the more you assume everyone is out to get you which keeps you further isolated and when people *are* around it makes you act like a paranoid dick; so nobody wants to hang out with you. Yeah. That is exactly what you’d say since you are out to get me MO!” the inmate said with accusatory volume and nodded his head with an outsized and mock attitude; making fun of it all. He smiled to make sure they knew he was kidding.

His sense of humor was dry so he had to give cues to people so that they knew he was fucking around.

“Ok, good. Well, it’s a feedback loop phenomenon and we can fix it, if you like,” MO said, ignoring the sarcasm.

“Well, go ahead, you do you. I’m sure whomever you help -and their loved ones- will appreciate it,” the inmate said.

“No, we mean for you,” MO said, not quite getting that the inmate knew that and was thus committed to being a smart ass for some time period yet undetermined. MO stared at him. Isaiah kept his own eyes closed.

“Oh, well, I’m sufficiently paranoid, just the right amount of paranoid. We should not fuck with the harmony, the balance, the ecology of my suspicions. Plus, who are you working for, who sent you?” the inmate began yelling in mock anger and then he and Isaiah began to laugh.

MO got the joke 1.1 seconds after they did and smiled too. He added a new mix of calcium and a new *benzo* -that he had created- to a *nanobot* that was now injecting the inmate -painlessly- in the neck.

“Well, it’s a thought,” MO said as he waited for the new drugs to take hold of the inmate.

“Yeah, my problem is I am too trusting actually. Burroughs said *a paranoid is someone who knows a little of what is going on* . He’s -a paranoid is- like barely onto the total malice of the world,” the inmate said; he had more to say but was feeling tired and didn’t feel like ranting and raving today. He looked out at Isaiah and the lab and let the grey wash over his visual system; he allowed it to calm him.

“Go on,” Isaiah said and issued a small stimulant in the air just under the inmate’s nose as he breathed in deeply and then frowned. MO looked at Isaiah with surprise as the inmate was now getting contradictory chemical augments.

“Ok, well,” the inmate huffed and acted out of sorts and stretched his neck down and motioned with his hand toward himself. This was now their shared signal to issue more morphine to him. Isaiah had a *nanobot* inject a micro-dose just at the neck; adding a muscle relaxant as well. The inmate was loaded up with stimulants and depressives now like two highways going north and south; he was thus torn in two.

“Done,” Isaiah said as the patient would have not felt the injection and thus needed to hear that he had been dosed with the meds. They had agreed to tell him when they did things, which they did most of the time.

“Ok, you ever read *Book of Job ; the Book of Job ?*” he corrected himself. As soon as he asked he laughed as he knew they had talked about the book about a dozen times. He began sentences with throat-clearing questions like that still and it made him laugh at how stupid he still could be.

“Ok, never mind,” the inmate said. “So, in *Job* , I’ve been wrestling this book like the *Nemean Lion* , man; and I can’t settle on the lesson in it.”

“Last time we spoke you thought *Job* had taken the noble position of acceptance that life was pain; that life was too complex for him and that he ought to let God be God and stay out of it. He -*Job* - should stay out of it,” Isaiah said.

“Yeah, *cover his mouth with his hand* . And look, whatever I say -and frankly I have no idea what I’ll say- but whatever it is, it’s *in addition to* - not supplanting- that notion. I still think mankind ought to be more humble in the face of God, the forces of nature, and whatever it is that lies behind life itself. I’m with Haldane on this; life is queerer than we *can* imagine.”

“Copy,” Isaiah said and nodded as MO timestamped the inmate’s fluctuating biometric data. MO marked forty-one separate gene expressions that had changed in the last 38.7 seconds.

“Ok, so I was thinking. See, even when *Job* complains, God doesn’t justify himself, instead, he brays about His *power* . He says, *dude, gird up your loins like a man. I will question you and you will declare -answer- to me. Have you an arm like God, and can you thunder with a voice like His?*

“And God ain’t wrong; I’m not saying that He is. I’m saying: that’s His answer. His answer -God’s answer- is, *hey asshole, I’m a badass, what are you?* See?” the inmate asked.

“No,” MO said.

“Well, ok, look, there are a hundred and one ways to answer someone who is questioning you. Hundred and one. Ok? You can ignore them; you can smite them; you can explain it in rational terms. You can paint them a pretty picture, you can enjoin them, beg them, coddle them, lie to them, explain it

in moral terms, scientific terms, you can lay out all manner of brain data, gene data, endocrine data, you can lay out the need for evil in a universe for there -well, for good to even exist. Or you can say, *might makes right*, ” inmate 16180339 said as the hummingbirds buzzed in the corner and the wasps crawled more than they flew; the ivy found itself perfectly oriented for the lights above as they metabolized CO² and transpired H² O and O² , as well.

The ants -with bodies divided unevenly- left pheromones in trails from the edges; the morning glories closed up for the day; the vertical tobacco outgassed very little phenols; and the caterpillars -yellow and red and green- rested on their rough and hirsute leaves.

The *stela*e hung equidistant apart and the sprayers misted as the concrete hardened more and more each day. The eyes of each god held steady; their desert hands held strange objects at 45 degrees. The weight put tension on the walls of the lab; the color of humid sand gave the greenery a nice relief.

The floor’s dirt moat barely vibrated at all as the *cicadae* slept under each now brown and previously individual grain.

“And God chooses that last argument. He chooses it. And I think that means something,” the inmate said and looked at MO. Both Ai were quiet. The bubbles of the soda water fizzed from an endless bottom of effervescence.

“See, what does God lack? Limitation, right?” the inmate asked. “And without limitation you lack insight, you lack self-reflection. What does every business guru tell you?” the inmate asked.

“Stop showing people the data that illustrates we rich fucks are 90% lucky; not 100% smart,” Isaiah said with a grin. He felt that was the right answer, but he intuited it was not the one the inmate wanted. But, he felt like inserting barbed jokes 1-4% of the time.

“No, they say, *failing teaches you way more than success* ,” the inmate said. “It’s the very act of being laid low, of being humiliated -of being beaten, wounded, hurt- that causes a being to self-reflect. Man has this, even Satan has this; Satan knew he was beaten when cast out of Heaven. But not God. God has no self-reflection until later,” the inmate said.

“Later?” Isaiah asked and looked at MO.

“Later. Yeah, when He knows what *Job* knows. That was when He finally got it. But, let’s back up. Ok, first, might does make right; that ain’t my idea, that ain’t even my old man’s idea. That is built into the universe.

“99.9% of all species have gone extinct, what has survived? Sharks and viruses, man. Like the worse predatory fucks on the planet are the only thing still around after all these millennia. And the shit that is old -not as old as sharks, but old, like trees- they do horrid shit that nobody is even aware of; they literally do business with fungi that capture creatures to enslave them for their nitrogen. I mean, people are clueless at how sinister the whole planet is. It ain’t just lions and tiger and bears. I’ve seen zebras drown foals of their rivals in the muddy lakes as the herd watches on. It ain’t merely a wolfish world, it’s a pine tree world.

“And pine trees are worse than wolves. Wolves just kill; they don’t enslave and suck juices from their victims for years,” the inmate said.

Isaiah’s eyes had run a new acuity upgrade and the PraXis cloud pinged him that it was completed. They were 1.7 times that of humans now.

“Wasps, do,” Isaiah said; both agreeing with and rebuking the inmate.

“Yeah, sophisticated -eusocial- wasps; and like ants, they enslave other animals too, man. It’s not like mankind is this uniquely evil creature. I mean we are uniquely evil in that we can do good too; but what I mean is there are hundreds of species that do shit worse than kill: they enslave, they torture, they lie, cheat and steal. Like, in all of nature, might makes right, period. And this ain’t my rule, it’s God’s rule and I think the metaphor in *Job*, is *that*,” the inmate said.

“Is what?” MO asked.

“That might makes right. See, God didn’t explain the moral rationale for making *Job* suffer. And there is a moral rationale for it. I could give it. It exists.

“But God chose to say, *might makes right, asshole. I can fuck you up and so I will fuck you up and who is this that darkens My counsel, by word without insight? Will you put Me in the wrong ever? Will you condemn Me that you may be justified?*

“He’s saying, *dude, you can’t be right, because My arms are bigger than yours* ,” the inmate said with a smirk that dropped into a stolid look so quickly that Isaiah began reading his *fMRI* data at once. He marked his own folder on the inmate right there. The time lapse -so short, almost too short to measure- was crucial for Isaiah’s idea on what the inmate just felt, thought -and *was*- in that moment. The inmate, Isaiah thought, was both resigned to and emboldened by this idea of will-to-power being ordained by the math of the universe, by biology next, then philosophically.

And thus, ultimately by God , Isaiah thought.

And the slight smile then quick fall of countenance suggested there were two things there at once. It was a tell -in the inmate- that Isaiah saw -felt- as his own CNS lit up and crackled and sparked.

“What are you saying; like actually saying?” Isaiah leaned forward and narrowed his fovea on the inmate. He was going to press on the inmate now. He was not going to allow for this ambivalence from the inmate now.

“*Jung* had this line where he called *Job* an *incurable optimist* . He said that *Job* thought that God was *just* in addition to being *powerful* ; that God had a good heart. But, *Jung* thought that this was a misapprehension of God. *Jung* thought God was half good, but half bad, half creative, half destructive, half God, half Satan. And that man was a metaphor for that, too. Man was half God and half Satan himself.

“And for man to miss this, for man to think God was all good, and not the capacious, compendium of the universe -including God and Satan both, the Garden and the Serpent both, the Lion and the Lamb both- well, to miss that was to miss the whole thing. Like to miss half a sentence was to miss the whole thing. Like to miss half the genome; to only see the 22 and one -the 23 of the 44 and two- would be to miss the whole being of man,” the inmate said as MO and Isaiah ignored half the murders, and showed nothing on their faces.

“And the point of *Job* , what *Job* -as emblematic of good men, of *naïve* men- meant in the Bible was that mankind better put some bass in his voice and gird up his loins and get real. Man better start kicking ass and taking names, or man was missing the point of life. And see, most shitheads think I mean a man should be a murdering maniac when I make a statement like

that; or be some rapacious business man. Fuck that. I mean, *be a man* , and that means be God and Satan both.

“I mean, be good to the good, and be evil *to do good too* ; cut the wicked down where they stand. See, at first I thought the *Bible* was to be ignored, I thought it was silly ass. Then I thought it was decent literature and interesting. Then I thought it had deep metaphor and ought to be taken as seriously as one took Mailer and Eliot.

“And then I thought it was the word of God,” the inmate paused and felt himself squirm, the morphine had made him feel so good he had dropped his guard. He immediately offered a caveat.

“But I didn’t think it was the word of God like every other Christian on the planet thinks it is. Shit, even when I do the right thing I do it for the wrong reasons,” he said and laughed at himself; he eyed the water in the glass. It was amber with whisky; it was stolid with ice as ballast. It sweated and made a ring below.

“I thought, *this Old Testament God, this God talking to Job, He is the God of Nature, He is the God of the Ancient Male* . God is the God that says, *hey, I made 13-14% of you badasses for a reason. I made you so that you will punish the wicked and eschew tawdry commerce & weakness that those dudes and chicks over there do merely to get along with the herd. I made you as I made all apex predators, to clean up the mess that the rest of the kingdom makes . I have millions of years of evidence of My ways, and I have My words to Job.*

“*I made you to be magnanimous, to do most of the work, to take care of a hundred women and sire a thousand scions; and defend the city’s walls. And I made you to give freely and generously and without measuring how much more that you do compared to everyone else -although you will do most of the work- but I also made you to fuck fuckers the fuck up when they get out of line and that means here is your code; I emboss it on your heart: Might Makes Right ,”* the inmate said this and opened his left hand -tethered to the closed fist of the right by the black chains- as if offering some invisible flame in the palm to impress and illuminate the right.

It was empty of all but that intent.

“And God said, you won’t need it written down, it’s on your heart, it’s in your viscera, your enteric nervous system, your MOA-A alleles, it’s in the operating system. I made you perfectly, motherfuckers, now do your job .

“And that means you find those psychopaths, those shiftless, spineless, evil fucks who kill and lie and cheat for money -or to get laid- and you kill them dead. You find the greedy fucks who care only for money and pussy and low shit and you knocked them the fuck out.

“Look at your instincts; show your works , God says. You -Lyndon- have had wealth merely to give most of it away, did you not? You had copious amounts of pussy to sire great offspring with good genes? Are not your genes strong? And you have harems to provide for your wives under one roof; not cheating on the sly. You were honest. Did you not lavish attention and instruction and gifts on them all?

“Others have wealth merely to horde it, they save it up in storehouses on earth. They have women just to get laid; infecting their wives with democratic genes; weak genes. And then half the time they -these men- run off and leave the women with kids with weak genes that are burdens to mankind. Betas rape more than alphas, betas abandon wives and children more than alphas; this is true in nature not just man. Beta chimps rape not alpha chimps , God says.

“Your aggression, your malice, your murder, is 180-degrees opposite of theirs; these others who act all tough now; their power is born of covid 3-phase plots; it is crafty, weak, scheming. These others, God says, and these haughty females are not mighty, they are crafty. And so their perfidy, their plots, their scams are not right -capital R, right- for they are not mighty. Read My words Goddammit!

“Your violence, God says, is right for it comes from a mighty place; I gave you strength of character, of spine, of arm. I made you to fuck shit up precisely because you won’t do it for mere money or sex, your heart finds that low and ignoble; does it not? But you’ll do violence for honor and righteousness. That’s the whole point, you dumb fuck! These scheming fucks are smirking and all proud of themselves because they think they felled the lion; the king of the jungle. Wipe those smirks off their epicene faces! God says.

“Now, get with the program, God says. Get with the real point of life; rediscover true moral action and drop this weak sister liberal bullshit. Get with God; for you will know my ways by paying attention to what I articulate; what I say is right. Listen to Me, not some liberal fag who keeps repeating the Sermon on the Mount ,” the inmate said in words compressed into fast -harried- sentences without joints or seams. He ranted. He spoke quickly and honestly even if stupidly and wrongly most of the time.

“The Book of Job says all this?” MO asked.

“Look on every one that is proud and bring him low. Tread down the wicked where they stand. Then will I also acknowledge to you that your own right hand can give you victory. Job 40:12 through 14,” the inmate said and smiled with a tilted head.

Isaiah held the breath and found no reason to disagree yet. He let it wash over him and he monitored the blood and brain of the man in chains. *The Sunday Christian ignored the violent parts and the atheists lamented them; but the righteous man knew the Bible was a handbook for war,* Isaiah thought.

But, both he and inmate thought of how he had not sired anything; the vasectomy was the metaphor riding around in the trunk of all that the inmate had just said. *The inmate had failed to do his job, and he knew it,* Isaiah thought. *The inmate knew it, and that was why he did what he did; in the manner in which he did it. The inmate followed God’s orders to smite his enemies and now he was to sire many sons to finish the magnanimity of the post-humiliated Job; to suffer the total devastation after being so naïvely generous, and then be given a new shot to be a man.*

God had promised Job a new life, new sons, had he not?

But his seed must first be rescued from the hidden places of Job, Isaiah thought. *To be childless with that genome -the inmate’s genome- was as evil as allowing all those others to get away with their wickedness for so long. He had hidden his seed in the dust, he had bound his own seed in the hidden places, he had buried himself -not his enemies- as God had instructed,* Isaiah thought as he read from the two lines of scripture the inmate had left out as he recounted God’s sanction for the treading upon his wicked enemies.

“Give wealth away as quickly as you make it; share your wealth with the world,” Isaiah said as the inmate looked and heard only the thumps from the trunk but had no idea what type of creature would be handed over once the vehicle came to a stop.

He knew Isaiah was smarter, and wiser than him. But he also knew, as the words came in pairs, like animals into the ark, *Isaiah was Consigliere to the Don; Shaman to King, Sigma to Alpha, the Devil to God.*

III. 2035 e.v.

“A ship out of *Bordeaux* , yeah. The *CSS Stonewall* , I believe,” Isaiah said. The lights dimmed as it was time for the plants to go into the thirty-three minute protocol for their transition to dark period.

“Man, sometimes I think you say things just to get me to admit I have no idea what the fuck you are on about,” he said and shook his head. He watched around and saw mostly darkness now; shadows moving about in the distance. The bees had built polyhedron cells flat on the wall behind the ivy; they spread out from each corner like a book half open; half closed.

“Look, *Bordeaux* isn’t just some place. It was a ship building hub of the world; the wine made shipping necessary. It had to be transported because it was in such demand. That it was the best wine in the world made them have to be the best ship builders in the world. Otherwise how does that wine get to the colonies for example?” Isaiah asked the young man.

“Ah,” Jack nodded. He felt it starting to lock in. This was their third meeting, but he still didn’t really know who these men were; but he figured they had their reasons. He tried to be flexible.

“See, if a place is great then it must develop other great things to support that great thing. No great thing can stand alone. The organism itself -man- is like this. If it has lungs, it needs a circulatory system to *transpo* the oxygen. It can’t just have great lungs. Well, then you need a great heart to pump that blood that’s transporting that circumnavigating oxygen, right? I mean we got ourselves a fucking city popping up here all of a sudden, just to support a pair of lungs. And those lungs weren’t even necessary until the damn thing had a CNS -a brain- that needed oxygen in the first place.

“So, you have a great brain, and the next thing you know, you *gotta* have lungs; and veins and blood and a heart and on and on. Then you need an immune system to defend it all, and waste management to export the entropy; the exhaust. It’s a city man. Well, the *Bordelaise* , they had to get that *mise-en-bouteille* wine out of the *Gironde* estuary, they had to build ships man. And they built the best.

“And once they did that, well, now you got ship builders and other *entrepreneurs* ready to load those ships with other cargo; I mean why let any ship have one day at port once it is built? The blood you needed to transport that O² , well it can ship hormones too, right? The circulatory system can *transpo* all kinds of *bio-chems* ,” Isaiah led Jack Four down the path with these analogies.

“I see,” Jack Four said as MO brought him a drink. It was clear and carbonated and had a bifurcated spearmint leaf on a long stalk; on the rim a thin circle of lime with the greenest rind he’d ever seen. *It was beautiful* , Jack thought, as he drank from it in a small sip to first judge its strength.

“Yeah, and anyway, that *CSS Stonewall* never made it into the fight; but *Bordeaux* ain’t just some fancy wine region. They were essential for slavery in this world. And they might even have helped the south win that war if they had put their all into it. The point is: a thing is an organism, whatever it is.

“A grape, a ship, a fact, a book, a man,” Isaiah said this as he handed Jack a book. It was a first edition -first printing- and had two mistakes in the text. Jack took it and held it in his left hand and felt the boards and cotton jacket on his finger tips and palm.

“Does Blax ever complain of betrayal?” Isaiah then asked as if he just thought of it in passing; he timestamped the boy’s CNS and endocrine system to measure his inner and outer response.

“No, he tells us stories sometimes -of people who ripped him off- but he doesn’t complain. He usually acts like it was his fault,” the young man said. Jack felt protective over Blax, and he hid that he -Jack- hated Blax’s stories and felt rage that the old man had allowed these people to get away with such things. But he wasn’t going to tell these people that. Blax was his Lt,

and a good man, *and these people*, he thought, *whomever they were, didn't need to know any of that.*

“Anyway, you never know what it will do with itself. It can start as the greatest wine region in the world and end up making the northwest passage from Africa to the America’s even possible. And a man can start with a heart, or a brain, or an ideal, or an idea, and from there, well,” Isaiah smirked as the sentence just dangled.

Isaiah thought of how all those slaves had been taken to *San Domingo* in those ships and he thought of all that built-up tension -tension built up and up under pressure of work and heat and maltreatment- until *L’ouverture* killed 10,000 white slavers in a burst and how that had slowly bankrupted France as they tried to put his rebellion down. He read the extant history, he constructed images in his mind from hot sugarcane fields to hulls of half-frozen ships in the ocean, he calculated all that endless data in zeros and ones; in hatreds and loves.

Isaiah saw the power-law, he saw the mathematics with integers as long as God’s arm.

But he felt the rage and the pressure push in from above and below and each side of the scabbard to the soul: the mind.

He thought of how that rebellion had been so costly to quash that it made France sell the Louisiana Territory to America and that this expanded south -of a western and doubled America- was seen by southern states as new fecund land eager to receive slavery for the next century or more; like cutting weeds just spread seed further afield. Isaiah saw patterns repeat and repeat *ad infinitum* , rebellion and slavery and rebellion over and over again. *Man*, he thought, *had no idea who they were or what the world they lived in was made of at all* . He looked at man the way man looked at apes in the zoo; with almost no malice at all.

“Anyway,” Isaiah said, being coy and saying 1% of what he knew, speaking -to Jack- as if he was referring to just any man, any man at all, “who knows what that man -and each part of his watery brain- would build out into the world?”

8. A Time for Tragedy; A Time for War There
has never been a fire so destructive as to
leave nothing for a future fire to consume
Letters from a Stoic [Seneca, Lucius A].

At a preliminary courtroom hearing on April 2, 1993, at which Daniel [Driver] was being charged with abusing William [Nesler] and three other boys, Ellie Nesler fired five shots at close range into Daniel's head, killing him instantly... She was tried and convicted of manslaughter and served 3 years of a 10-year sentence before being released on appeal based on jury misconduct *The World Before Tomorrow* [Diamond, Jared]

But ask now the beasts and they shall teach thee; and the *fowels* of the air and they shall tell thee

Job 9:7 [King James Bible]

I. 2036 e.v.

The *Bolivarian-Sonora* cartel had suffered losses of a billion dollars in Colorado alone.

1,509 of its soldiers had not returned since January. Victor Cruz, the *don* at just forty-six-years-old had grown up in *Chiapas* but been educated at Yale. He had an army; *and he was close to using it*, he thought, ruminating on his latest troubles. The border dispute between he and *los Ustados Unidos* was no longer mere annoyance. And their size and power -the cartel's- was large enough now to ponder a hot war with their neighbor to the north. Especially, he thought, if he could fight one state at a time.

His father had sent him and his brother off to the US to learn; and learn he did.

He returned -at age twenty-nine- after working for three US corporations and one in Dubai. He taught his father how to launder money better in Geneva -with US corporate bank cut-outs- and with the Chinese; he introduced his father to cryptocurrencies. He built vertically integrated lines of supply and distribution, so each way the trucks and roads and men and

feral lands were full of their product going out or their money returning home.

Under his system, not one wasted foot, or mile, or opportunity was allowed; no gaps, no waste, no boundaries at all.

He explained -during cartel meetings- that losses up to 14% could be absorbed just by the offset in these efficiencies and that the US government had never succeeded in intercepting more than 4% of their product in a single year and -on average- a mere 2.3% confiscation rate over time.

It made them more risk-tolerant, he explained, and that they could afford to experiment now that profits were up by so much -with no increase in production- and with no increase in unit cost. *It was free money born of efficiency, that was*, he then asked his father, *was it not, what he'd been educated for?*

Rudolfo Cruz-Verichoa had been born in 1965 and agreed with his son; in theory anyway. He implemented these new programs from *mount Rantheiteto* with the Mexican *Ej ército* at the border of his fiefdom like the cell wall between him and the jungles of the *Lacondon* and the DEA both.

The Mexican army could claim it was to surround him, but everyone knew it was to protect him.

The cartel had paid -in league with his rival syndicate members- ten billion dollars to Mexican politicians, judges, and cops in the last eighteen months alone. The cartels made fifteen trillion in gross profits in the same time which made them as big as China in terms of GDP.

They were a country within a country, a mirror within a mirror, a *mise-en-abyme* .

Victor was a risk taker, unlike his older brothers who liked the consistent way they had done things since 1999. Victor was more than aggressive, he was charming -he was the baby of the family with something to prove and he knew that charm was half of life- and he'd made them an extra billion dollars each month since his plans were implemented.

Rudolfo had given the son a bonus of 10 million dollars. Victor had retuned the money and asked -instead- for the pick of one US state in which to run all operations, as a model; an experiment. He had told the father that if he

could run one state his way -*from seed to sale* - he could prove his methods sound.

Rudolfo Cruz-Verichoa had agreed but with a warning.

He told his son that to control something is to take responsibility for it; its life -and thus his own- would now be in his own hands. *Failure was death, for all involved; and my son must never forget such things*, the patriarch had said to his *Victor Cruz-Verichoa* .

I know, I know papa, Victor had said as he shook the old man's hand. That was in 2020 and within eight months the father was dead; and Victor was the new *don* .

Isaiah stood at the solvent sink and had asked MO to provide him with the SNPs of the prisoners under the XI.3 PraXis project at the BOP ADX in Florence; also at the DOC facility in Canon City. They had run DNA samples of all 19,103 inmates in the system and collated the data among the alleles for psychopathy and anti-social behavior: the *DRD4s* and *DRD2s* and *MAO-A* short chain and on and on.

But now Isaiah was looking for the genes that code for melanocytes within three narrow parameters that he had outlined. He looked at *mitochondrial* DNA to track the *amtriacrhialline* , as this was a better indicator of Mexican heritage. The mother's genome would thus have 85-90% native American DNA, an indicator of a 98% likelihood of Mexican heritage going back at least five generations.

The *mtDNA* was tracked and sorted from prisoner samples and a database of thirty-seven known *loci* that correlate with skin pigmentation. He used the AUC of .60-.70 for the intermediate pigmentation that predominates in Mexican nationals and those of the South American zone; with only *Argentines* largely exempt. *Argentines* were more European than any other South American cohort. Their nationality would be difficult to trace purely by using the pigmentation alleles as they were almost 90% European.

The US is one of very few countries that doesn't use ethnicity as its basis for its nationhood; 99% of all countries are ethnically determined, Isaiah pondered as he sorted the data. *From Japan and China to England and Mexico, nations were races, except in the US*, Isaiah had noticed. He

noticed something else in that stat that he felt no need to even put into words. The data poured in as he saw images -via the *landsat* satellites and his *bots* - of his barges out to sea and also heat waves in the forests south of Lot 45 .

Isaiah saw *thermo-cumulous nimbus* clouds form from the water-ether of trees burned in larger acreage -and hotter temperature- fires between each city from New Mexico to Colorado, Russian and Norway and Lebanon and Syria. People -Isaiah thought- *had no idea how much atomized water lived in the billowing clouds above the forest fires he now tracked via satellite.* He watched not just green trees but blue water burn.

He measured ground temperature by the centigrade of the numina that stretched miles above the down pressure of cold stratospheric air as the gas cavitated and the electricity built up in terminals at stochastic points all along these massive auras of clouds. He took note of each level of dissolved ferric metal in each super-heated -from below- then condensed -from above- molecule of hydrogen and oxygen water in the *venturi* of each curve of each compressing and elongating cloud.

Lightning struck sixteen kilometers from the original large-acreage burns; water rained down between conflagration and dry *coup de foudre* ; each element turned to static and vapor like charged fog. His tongue jammed between starboard molars; his body temp increased .01 degree; his left hand rose as his eyes lowered; his mind drifted to other things.

He then used the *genome-wide association* studies tweaked with markers of chromosomal damage; epidermal injury caused by the sun; harm associated with exposure in zones below the 28th parallel.

It was then combined with other protein coding markers like sugar content due to the elevated sucrose in Mexican national's food sources, and thus a 3-letter code was built for each person. With 99% of native born Americans having just one set of a 2 out of 3-letter match, and a 98% chance that a Mexican, Brazilian, Columbian -and all nationals from central America- having another set with at least two sets of the same 2 of the 3-letter match - with 65% having a three letter match- this gave Isaiah the confidence that he could determine a person's nationality within an error rate of <2%.

He smiled and wiped his hands of solvent he'd used to remove the cherry-red bearing grease.

Autosomal DNA was used as system-one in the algorithm -as a short hand- but if its perceived reliability dipped below 88% accuracy then the *mtDNA* would be used as a second source. Isaiah felt so confident in this methodology that he shut off his searching function and corralled the data to move forward building his model and plan. His *limbic* system -thanks to electrical activation brought on by a threshold gate being triggered- sent dopamine to his *hippocampus* and *orbito-PFC* and he felt sated and warm and all aglow.

His *mu-opioids* melted like ice in a summer drink; condensation on the outside of the slim *collins* container. His CNS -like the hand- absorbed cold wetness of phase-change between semi-permeable membranes of brain and clear glass.

He knew he had it nailed down. His *parietal* lobe was so electric it looked like dry lightning over eastern Colorado's plains.

He felt what he now knew *meant* something.

He looked at what was colloquially called the *third root* ; the silent ancestry of African DNA present in most Latinos in levels from 1% to 9%. This would be used as the 4th marker if the subject had only two of the three markers and was within that 2% error rate due to low fealty in the two markers that did obtain.

This, Isaiah assured himself, *would reduce the error rate by an additional .04%.*

He built a *Bayesian* model plugin *via* AUC values from the known cohorts and self-reporting data and came up with a .803 score for intermediate pigmentation most associated with Mexican nationals and South American populations *writ large* .

The *KITLG* and *ASIP* genes have mutations that associate with lighter skin that are ubiquitous in those of European heritage, and thus the prevalence of *Mestizo* DNA melded with the *Iberian* genome over the last 500 years in Mexico was a good marker; especially when using the more consistent *mtDNA* .

This, Isaiah thought, could be used to eliminate false positives with American blacks, who have higher melanin but lack the ASIP allele that Mexican nationals have; dark Mexicans have pigmentations more tenebrous than some American blacks -if one used merely the eyes- but the ASIP gene was the giveaway to prevent any mix up based on pigmentation alone . Additionally, with the other two matrices Isaiah had built into the algorithm, he was confident that they would incur false positives of less than 190 people, among the targeted cohort of 17,871 suspected individuals. Further, he determined, if they added behavioral metrics -to discern if the individual was engaged in anti-social activity or found in locations known for drug smuggling- they could eliminate almost all chance of type-one error.

Isaiah could imagine an actual error rate of less than five people total if the program was implemented over a 66-month period.

This seemed safer than sugar water to him -he thought- as he was fed more data from the barges out to sea between the east of *Skye* and Norwegian coastal west.

He began uploading the search algorithm onto the *nanobots* and then crafted a CRISPR cas9/12 vector that would be implanted in the subjects - with the identified alleles- so they could be tracked within the perimeter as outlined by their *Praetorian Program* that currently monitored the borders of the *colorful* state.

Isaiah had built and release more than a million *nanobots* -constructed from carbon in the atmosphere- over a nineteen-week period and released them each week with the inmate's visits; 89,000 moving through the open doors as the inmate was transferred in and out of the lab each Wednesday.

Those million-plus *bots* patrolled the borders south and north & east and west and tracked animal herds, traffic by vehicle, foot traffic, aircraft, and even migratory birds. The *bots* invigilated the space between bark of each third tree. They collected data to set a baseline of movement and Isaiah had been able to set a kind of clock to how it all worked; the state was like a cell with warm fluid around it. It was a turbulent sea Isaiah felt commander of; like *Neptune* . It was a watery world ruled by a god who nervously eyed jittery fish but let some things pass; things, Isaiah thought, *like trusted mermaiden and shark with no guile at all.*

Inside each sea and each misty thing were roiling bio-chemicals and viruses and *glycolysis* changes within its semi-permeable walls. Inside entropy and heat and breakdown all existed side-by-side with universal constructors and *Kelvin* moments between molecules that spun like magnetic neutron stars way out in space.

He saw the immune response of law enforcement and the metabolic response of goods-production and the transfer of waste outside the cellular bulwarks. The cities were like growing cells, and some smaller towns like dying ones, and the state itself he saw as the tissue invigilated by the arteries of I-25 and I-70 and the vascular roads like Colfax and 285 and capillaries weaving in and out of each little town like Bryant street and Bayaud and Pearl and South Main.

Colorado was marbled by the fat of the land. *Gilpin* and *Colorado Blvd.* and *Tejon* and *Arapahoe* all boundaried and vivisected the muscle of the state.

He would monitor each part: the roads and cars; the cities and its people; the resources trucked in and out.

He saw the movement of the Grey Wolf from New Mexico into southern Colorado and the beef cattle attacked and elk with their bellies ripped out just -seemingly- for practice or for fun. The grey wolves liked to kill; they were not unlike the chimpanzee or human being that way. *The Grey Wolf will kill way more than it needed in order that it may merely eat*, Isaiah saw. There was a special pack of five adolescent wolves that had travelled forty miles a day from *Taos* to within thirty miles of where Isaiah was in Florence, Colorado. He saw them moved at night; he saw the tallest one - the alpha- with one grey leg among a coat of nearly pure black. He limped - slightly, and only when slowing- even as he ran fastest in the pack.

Upon them was Isaiah's panoptic eye.

He marveled at their patterns, the traveling, the stalking, the frenzy of the encircling of their prey. He took note and still images of the gang tackling, the vivisecting, the laying out of ruminants like Christ on the ground.

He saw stigmata on hooves and crown of thorns made of co-mingled saliva and frozen lupine breaths in the winter of 2036 e.v.

By then, the Governor had made real progress with crime, reducing it by almost 30% since taking office in 2018. He had left in 2026 and re-run in 2030 and won; and he was -again- victorious in 2034. The CRISPR program had worked for 7,207 inmates the first eight years and for another 9,080 since. These were all augmentations for offenders set for releases within five years of the operations; and all with inmate consent. Now he had changed the protocol to include inmates with release dates further out. Each inmate was offered parole approval in exchange for successfully completing the program; which meant the surgery and the re-education also.

Isaiah ruminated over the signed documents from each inmate that had sanctioned the genome fixes and the re-education. He saw signatures like lightning strikes in blue and black ink. He saw typed contracts like genomes of endless base-pairs that built muscle and organs and blood of A or B type.

PraXis' -under the aegis of the State- re-socialization protocols had changed over the years as well; but the use of inmate 16180339 was still the paradigm; patient zero. MO's work with him had been the basis for all future protocols.

Isaiah worked merely at the edge. He recalled -and replayed a conversation with the Governor of the state of Colorado: Isaiah: You're a Marxist.

Gov Sou: What? [displeasure]

Isaiah: You think you can fix man by fixing society Gov Sou: That's the opposite of what I think, Isaiah. [pique]

Isaiah: You got elected Governor first, did you not? You took control of the State as Marxism requires. And now the schools. Correct?

Gov Sou: [inaudible; with vex]

The measurement of the inmate's brain in moral scenarios, the marking up of the *ventro-medial* PFC and the *orbital* sections down to each codon and neuron -as it fired along its terminal dendrite and axon- had provided them with a map of the moral mind. It was an irony never discussed.

They'd begun to use the inmate's brain as model for the normal working of the ethical mind; plastic and malleable under stress; open to new inputs. He was the new paradigm for moral sensitivity in formerly psychopathic inmates. These other -refurbished- inmates had to learn -with their new

coding hardware- how to even think justly, principledly; to see others as ends, not mere means.

The genetic part was easy, it was digital; but the post-genetic part required training and willpower and commitment. That part was all analog.

Inmate 16180339 had a unique CNS. He was martial, magnanimous, morally activated, disgust sensitive, yet -most importantly in this domain- he was open to new information. He was high in trait openness; and he could deal with the innate chaos that comes from a new framework. The body and mind spend a lifetime building a map of the world, from the organism's own body, to the environment, to conception of right and wrong. He was willing to be wrong.

Each organism had a map; and new ideas meant new maps. And new maps meant old maps had to burn.

Another way to say it was that the inmate was willing to burn everything down and start over. Trait openness sounds better though , Isaiah thought as the data poured in from the cloud.

That is why nobody -99% of mankind, Isaiah corrected- could learn new ways of being; why new facts did not change their minds; it was too hard for them, as hard as asking them to learn Japanese at age fifty or lift four-hundred pounds over their heads . They, in order to learn new moral codes, would need to be very chaos-tolerant, they would need to have some capacity to deal with throwing out a huge chunk of their moral map for a new one.

The inmate was one of very few that was metabolically set up for this.

And it resided in a suite of genes that Isaiah had found. He guarded them like a buried chest of earned silver; talents of precious metal given to a shaman by a grateful king. Isaiah saw *foss* hide coppers and silvers and mercury; fluids both contain and occlude metals in each drop.

He uploaded -to the cloud- the 1975 Stanford study on the inability of 84% of the population to effect information uptake after being corrected of their errors; he pinned the 179 subsequent studies that replicated the results; tagging the alleles to each report.

He reloaded Kurzban's book on hypocrisy to the bibliography as he highlighted the top nine studies.

They had needed a way to re-socialize the other Colorado inmates' brains after the genes for psychopathy had been augmented by the CRISPR cas9/12 vector; coding proteins in the brain for empathy and inhibitory regulation. They now had -after the surgery- a man with a fixed brain. But a brain was mere hardware.

The hardware -and wetware- was normal now, but the software was still corrupt.

Each new -second tier- inmate of the PraXis study needed retrained -metabolically- to respond in a pro-social manner to moral situations. He had previously been unable to think or feel in moral terms. He had lacked empathy, but now he had it -the *amygdala* for example was now structurally and chemically nominal- but he was inarticulate in the language of ethics; this repaired inmate could not think articulately in this way yet. He felt things -weird sensations of proto-guilt or compassion- but he had no way to put them into metabolic, in *somatosensory-motor-cortical*- action.

The new man had no *Logos* .

He was awkward morally; like a paraplegic fixed and given renewed motor action, but still needing to train his muscles to actually perform in the world.

We teach children 0-4 how to be moral with subtle cues that reinforce moral behavior and punish unethical ways , Isaiah thought as he ran through the data again. This is -in fact- essential for children born with normal brains. A child with perfectly functioning moral brains -children with normal genes and brain structures of the *amygdala* and *PFC*- can still become psychopathic if they are not socialized by forty-eight to fifty-nine months.

An austere -amoral- environment signaled to the genes to express -produce- an austere -amoral- child. Isaiah knew the math on why, but he also thought of how this might manifest as 77% of black kids had no father in the household, or -every once in a while- a kid was raised by actual wolves.

But any stunted environment, would cascade , Isaiah thought as the fractals grew like ivy on the wall, like ants underground, as ideas of wicked men

climbed like crabs upon themselves in buckets of galvanized steel.

Motherless rats -who bred- were poorly socialized all the way up until the third generation; he thought of the inmate's own father, who had no father, and how stunted a father he was too. *As important as genes were, gene-expression due to rearing environment was the hidden secret in their work,* Isaiah mused as the data fell like rain; then harder like hail.

He downloaded one hundred eleven more reports and augmented the twenty-three he just had on his interface.

Isaiah began to regroup his thinking and ran through the vectors he needed to articulate for the final account. The most crucial behavioral mode involved *rough-house* play performed by father and child in order for the child to learn the limits of their bodies and others, to link up play with harm and fairness, and adjust pressure and tactics based upon power dynamics and the subtle cues of sounds, interoceptive & felt -that is, C-nerve- pain.

Isaiah recorded pain *via* the dorsal horn of three mammals; the bear, chimp and human animal.

The literature on this was quite thorough , Isaiah thought as the reports were filed on the cloud. Phenomenon like the play-circuit as discovered by *Jaak Panksepp* showed that fair play is innate to mammals and that young boys need to play to develop their moral brains.

Morality was built right into biology.

Honor was biological but always in flux. It had genomic correlates, and epigenetic signaling; it lived liked an organism, Isaiah thought as he saw the wings rise and fall to port and starboard of the insect in instar itself. He saw five kinds of mottled browns. He saw five-hundred ups and three-hundred downs. He expanded from mammals to insects and from black to white to brown.

The taboo on rough-housing boy-play had damaged the brains of millions of American youth between 2000 and 2030 e.v., he thought. By 2030 -at which point the medical science had finally been proved sufficient to policy makers who themselves had barely 111 IQs- the change to school and home education in thirty-eight of fifty states had reverted to the organic mean. But in that period the nation had -in *lieu* of properly educating boys- used

methamphetamines like Ritalin to calm -neuter- these so-called ADHD kids. These children -nearly forty-million of them now in fact- had brain damage from over-protective moms, weak fathers, and totalitarian schools with zero-tolerance for masculine behavior at any level.

Isaiah saw the data and -in his mind- pulled on the threads of individual boys who had been stunted and stunted and ruined.

The national prison population suffered a spike in 2020 e.v., due to these youths coming of age -*the criminal instinct is operational from sixteen to twenty-nine*- Isaiah thought and added to the report. PraXis developed a second program just to re-socialize these Colorado boys who had be born with normal brains but had been functionally abused by their pusillanimous and ignorant GenX parents -and Left-wing, anti-male schools- and been -thusly- turned into moral morons.

These millennial boys were not sociopathic *per se* ; rather, they were now amoral types who would sway in the moral winds. Thus, a significant proportion of them turned to criminal behavior, although most of it was white-collar in nature; and thus, did not show up in prison stats. Most white-collar crime goes un-punished; unrecorded; unpunished. Many came from *bourgeois* homes and had high IQs and so their amoral behavior was sub-clinical: *they became bankers, politicians, journalists and financial advisors and other criminals like that* , Isaiah thought as he double checked the data.

However, an increase of criminal aliens, African-American boys raised in fatherless homes -and lastly these brain-damaged boys- conspired to increase the criminal population by 14.4%. It was only the reduction of endogenous psychopaths by their -PraXis'- CRISPR program that offset this rise. *The program had reduced recidivism in previously incarcerated men by 45.1%, but with the increase in these foreign-born psychopaths, feral black youth, and Ritalin kids, the reduction in crime in Colorado was reported as a mere 29%*, Isaiah noted for the report; he then re-filed the amended report to the PraXis cloud as its graphs mottled and changed hue inside the circle -the globe- of the pie chart.

Governor Sou had asked for details on why crime had only dropped by 29.1% and Isaiah now had better answers for this question.

29% was laudable, and the Governor was roundly seen as heroic for it -as the other forty-nine states saw a rise in criminality- but Sou was furious that his actual numbers had been attenuated by these outside causes he had no way to predict or control. So, he focused on the 8% of the so-called *Ritalin kids* that he could re-socialize with a slight tweak to their *dmPFC* with the CRISPR vector and what he hoped was out-patient re-socialization in less than twelve-weeks.

He had instructed PraXis employees to start a program in the public school. He had glared at Isaiah over the illegal-aliens who were *fucking with his numbers* as well, he said, as the data was read to him. The Governor had leaned against the slab with his ankles crossed, arms folded and set his jaw to stun. Nathan had behaved insouciantly but everyone could feel the hot hatred coming off the executive as the numbers were announced, dissected and attributed to this or that.

Sou ignored the particular African-American issues as if they lived in some DMZ between illegal aliens and the poorly socialized; even as Isaiah had explained they were worth focusing on sperate from the other criminal -and recidivist- populations due to their unique history in America and the fall-out from the social programs that dissolved the two-parent family in the black community at rates higher than three quarters. Isaiah had not even -yet- brought up the tension and stress of incessant cognitive over-load living in a society designed a full standard deviation above in average population IQ. Isaiah had begun to build algorithms to test whites -then Asians and Jews- for similar phenomena: he added language complexity to random things to test how whites with mean IQs would feel at the allostatic level. Each population would be stress-tested by augmenting the instructions to their *milieu* by one *SDfM* from their personal IQ.

They would see words they didn't know, instructions more complex, bureaucracies even harder to navigate and he would test how they reacted on the inside. He would do this *via nanobot* and not tell one person until he had the results. It was a hypothesis and he didn't exactly know where he had come up with it, but it piqued his interest and so he ran small trials by cognitively -linguistically- over-loading random groups and random people for periods of time as they lived in the wider world.

The Governor began to speak; his arms remained folded and his jaw slid in and out like a piston on a connecting arm tied to a crankshaft in his hothead. Isaiah listened but in background he watched as allostatic load increased by an average of 18% for each population as their street signs and bank forms - and police instructions during a traffic stop- all got more and more complex than they could handle. He measured cortisol and respiration and too the epinephrine on the *dmPFC* .

He watched as some had *parietal* activation and some saw malice in clouds. Isaiah then -as his algorithms ran in the world, as the Governor spoke, as Nathan nodded- took note that American blacks both saw themselves -and were seen by the infrastructure- as alien and anomalous themselves. He felt this mattered to the program -any program- they decided upon. He mentioned it again as the executive paused; but Isaiah was overruled.

“I’m trying to simplify this Isaiah, not make it more and more complex,” Sou had said as the other members of team felt grateful for such a rebuke.

That school program had begun in 2030 as he took office amid the increasing tension among the population , Isaiah noted as he double checked the records and made sure his timeline was in order. Immigration had been checked by 2026 but was on the rise again when he was replaced by Jared Polis for one term -in 2026 e.v.- *and all Sou’s programs had been rolled back by the liberal do-gooder with shit for brains and empty space for balls*, Isaiah concluded in his mind; but not in the report.

Immigration was death, Isaiah saw in the numbers as he abandoned his observation of his program on IQ and stress and let it play out -in background- without his oversight.

This idea on immigration was an epidemiological conclusion; and Isaiah saw it as such. The body -the state- was already overloaded with sociopaths, low IQ populations within each race and then a mismatch between a multicultural society placing stress on each population for different reasons; low IQ frustrated and distrustful; high IQ annoyed and contemptuous. The body was stressed out and loaded down and immigration just put sand in their pockets and tacks in their shoes and larded their back with rucksacks of one hundred pounds of non-potable water.

It was like the introduction of pathogens into the filthy and gum-diseased mouth; into an open wound.

Isaiah saw chimps in *Kenya* and *Namibia* infected with *toxoplasma* approach leopards so mesmerized were they by the regal cats. *Parasites often encourage hominids to be enamored by -and thus approach- that which will kill them*, he thought. He had analyzed the media as corporate in structure -making models of how they were funded *via* advertising, and how the money was spent- and thus he had forgotten that men ran media conglomerates not machines. He had forgotten his own rule that the body is first, the mind second. He watched the Governor speak with more and more vex and the unfolded arms began pointing at things then people in the lab. The CEO of PraXiS -Isaiah saw- was up off the slab -ankles uncrossed and head jutting forward- and he was now facing each member of the team -in turn- as he demanded answers he never once liked once they were given to him.

Isaiah then had a thought -an analogy- *that the corporate owned media was truly -at the level of men- a Jewish-owned media . Being a Jew was like any tribe: it was exclusive and controlled each member by this common bond. And, he went on, this organism the Jews had built was like not unlike that parasite; infecting the mind of the body politic to get America to approach the Mexican & Muslim 'leopard' and be eaten all for the benefit of the parasite itself .* It was more complex than that, but as a heuristic -Isaiah thought- it worked for his new model. The Jew both built and was built by the tribe, the tribe built the media, the media built the impulses in the minds of the country writ large .

The parasite didn't like its home in man, it wanted inside the cat, Isaiah thought.

The parasite wanted to expand its boundaries and domain. Like any empire, it saw conflict at its own border and marched its troops to the sea. Like any organism it sought the edge to defend.

The media elites -the Jews- didn't like America -or any unfissured country- they wanted globalism, Isaiah thought; again he saw this as an epidemiological analysis as he turned each phenomenon into its corollary in the diseased body. He had enough data, he assumed. He -then all at once-

proceeded with his analysis and plan. *Like any virus, they saw that openings and boundaries existed along borders of the cell and the perimeter of each man*, he thought, as he built four more algorithms and loaded them into sixteen bots .

All of it was to be broken down , Isaiah thought as he tried to see into the mind of his foil.

They didn't like the nation as a structure -for they had never found a homeland in which they could live- and because America was weakest -structurally- and European nations were already infected with the hordes, they had focused on media more and more . He remembered Chomsky had said that in a free country -when the government cannot control the body- they go for the mind. America was too free to control corporeally; so the media controlled the mind of its victims; its host.

He saw parasites infect the CNS of ants and sheep and men; as they could in no way control the body of such a free organism at the tissue, the joint, the muscle.

He saw spores grow from the heads of eusocial ants and suns rise and set as the ants prayed at the spires -the minarets- of blades of high-nitrogen grass. He saw the white wool of the sheep; the teeth; he saw the pink of the gums, tongues and bellies of three. He ran all the data on blood salinity and neural firing at twelve different times day. He saw what the earth's curve gave and what the moonlight took straight away.

He heard music like bells and strings made from cast iron and viscera the color of albumin.

He let the media data map onto the epidemiological data; he then laid them on his mind like transparencies; like layers of silt; limestone x-rayed through gravel and noon-blue apples themselves. At times Isaiah saw the sugar on the skin; the fruit in barrels; the wine in bottles dark and shaped in three types.

Isaiah finished the encryption of the message to the cartel and bifurcated the text using Burroughs's atavistic cut-up methodology as paradigm to confound any cryptologist on the other end who would look for sophisticated cyphers; it was to be sent out *via* two different IPs, seventy-

seven seconds apart. Then the transmission itself was encrypted again and the key code was sent on the web via www.sanctionthebook.com .

The headline of the email had told the *don* that if he wanted to read the coded message he would need to go to that address and gain the keycode and that that would decipher it.

Victor -after receiving the first email- thought for 8 hours and spoke with his brothers; returning to a dialect and argot from when they were kids and spoke in ways to evade the panoptic eye of their father. He also -in more straightforward ways- conferred with two of his lieutenants before he decided to get the key. On July 26th , 2036 e.v. at 0434hrs he read:

Don Victor :

The key that deciphered this message works only once, so if anyone but you have opened it -or if this is someone else reading the *don's* epistle now- it will not be readable again.

If it is you *don* , then know this: no one but those you tell will know its contents; it cannot be re-read.

Once opened it shall not be read again and it will be erased within thirty-minutes.

Here is our offer and it is non-negotiable.

All Mexican nationals involved in any illicit activity have been killed by our team. We gave no warning and will offer none in the future; if you or any more foreign nationals come to Colorado for any reason you will be immediately killed. This is not a governmental program, it's not subject to sanction by anyone.

It's unilateral and permanent.

However, if you -despite the deaths of your subalterns- insist on attempting to bring your business into our state, we will become more aggressive and come for you at home.

Stay out of Colorado, and tell you friends to do the same. If you do, then we wish you well in the forty-seven other contiguous states. But, if in three days all cartel activity has not stopped in Colorado, your home there in the hills of the *Lacondon* jungle will be targeted and no matter

where you go, we will follow. We have technology you cannot even conceive of; it's beyond what the CIA has; it's beyond your ability to defend against.

It's like *Cortez* against the Mayans.

His small numbers and vastly superior technology erased an entire civilization. We can and will do the same to Mexico. In order to save face, do not tell your men what it is you're capitulating to; just -merely- tell them that Colorado is off limits and to increase your presence in all other states. They will not know you chose to give in to our demands. We communicated in this manner so you were not backed into a corner and thus forced to defend your honor. This is business; be a business man and make a business decision.

No need to respond, we will judge you by your actions *don* .

-*Isaiah*

P.s. to show our reach we have used our technology to kill a certain number of your men there on your estate. They will be dead by the time you finish this letter. It's a small measure of our reach and *will* . We are polite but ruthless and unfeeling, we will murder everyone in your entire country if necessary. For now, your family is off-limits. *Por Ahora*.

Victor felt a pang of fear; then a corollary twinge of anger as rebuke to his own inner-turmoil. He then heard a noise that activated his spinal cord prior to alerting the *audio-cortex* . The spinal cord -which reports harsh sounds to the *orienting reflex* first- signaled the body to feel fear quickly - axiomatically- and his panic rose before he knew -his *neo-cortex* knew- that the sound was just his lieutenant *Alejandro* entering the door loudly. *Victor* closed the laptop and listened as Alex rambled on about some of the men collapsing and that several of his *coterie* of guards were -in fact- dead.

"Close the door; follow me," *Victor* said. The men moved quickly through the egg-white stucco halls downstairs and into the beige safe room; once inside he had *Alejandro* close the three-foot-thick door.

"Turn on the CCTVs," *Victor* said.

The monitor showed the grounds of his mountain compound and what appeared to be thirty to forty men down and a few men up and kneeling by the bodies. The *don's* personal security detail was now reduced to less than ten men. *Alejandro* asked what was in the message but *Victor* deferred; saying only that the *capos* should be notified by messenger to meet in the town of *Vrantuci* in four hours. *Alejandro* was still.

“Alex, now, send whoever is left,” *Victor* said with a voice one octave deeper and eyes darker under the brow that was flush -from capillary dilation- but cool and dry.

Alex left the room as *Victor* watched him -via the monitors- run upstairs and out and commandeer two men left alive; putting them -with quick and simple instructions- in one of the GLEs. *Alejandro* then coached the remaining men to help him stack the bodies in the garage as he ran to pull the cars out into the courtyard to make room.

Isaiah had sent a hundred *nanobots* loaded with cyanide sufficient to kill five men in each and with the genomic codes of men that had been last seen in the *Sat* FLIR images taken while hovering over *Don Victor's* compound four days ago. The *bots* traveled the 1,900 miles without incident and when within nine-hundred yards of the *longs and lats* of the location began reading each genome of any organism they approached.

Forty-five of the men -that had been there when the images were taken- were on the grounds now, and the *bots* attached to their exposed skin on the neck or arm and injected the dose of the poison killing them within thirty-seconds. The *bots* had used all their fuel to travel such a distance and powered off to be buried with the corpses of men.

The remaining *nanobots* found no matching DNA among the twelve survivors. The *bots* began to search in larger and large circles until their systems required an energy source to replenish their reserves. They moved amongst the trees of the wooded area beyond the compound, and after attaching to the bark high up in the boughs they began absorbing solar rays for the next six hours until the sun's arc dipped below the canopy of the black and green-grey trees.

The *bots* would wait to see if the remaining fifty-five men -on their list- would appear at the compound; if not they would attach themselves to *Don*

Victor and wait until he met with these men whenever he moved. It was their secondary protocol and they waited patiently among the trees as the mansion's staff scurried about hiding bodies and trying to still cook meals and do laundry and behave as if all was well. *Don Victor's* wife lived in Mexico City, not here at the compound.

Don Victor called to inquire as to her health.

The phone in the *Lacondon* compound's safe room had no special ring or indication of where it originated from; its only difference was that it was untapped. When *Marcella Cruz* answered she was her laconic self. *Victor* hid his anxiety and they chatted for four minutes mentioning the kids -they were at home, in the back yard- just once. He bid her *adieu* and she blew a kiss into the phone and he hung up the phone in relief as he texted the guards at that residence to ask for an update.

Isaiah received updates on the numbers and genomes of the men that were down and that the *bots* with sufficient payload had remained in a holding pattern; the *bots* sent signal and detailed their plan to follow the *don* to his next meet to see if any further targets could be dispatched. Isaiah sent a new algorithm instructing them to cease the operation as planned and to switch to a *recon* protocol; they were to follow the *don* and glean genomic data from any one he met and add it to the data base of potential targets; but the new instructions were that no one else was to be killed.

The message is sent , Isaiah thought, and any further escalation would only make the *Don Victor* irrational. *He was warned, and weakened, but if no one else died*, Isaiah reasoned, *he might just let the whole thing go and observe the terms of the deal* . Isaiah calculated it as having a 68.9% chance of success and began collating data from the southern wall of the lab and its poppy plants; their bulbs were now brown and white and had a clear crust around their vivisected *cicatrix manet* .

II. 2022 e.v.

Isaiah -at 03:13 hours- sifted the material as it came in from Gallup's phone polls and R&R's questionnaires taken from Denver University and his own algorithmic program that used conversations and brain data gleaned from the *nanobots* deployed during the election for bio-chemical dispersal. The

bots had originally been designed to last nineteen months before declining to a state of disuse, but even thirty-four months later 99% of them were still functional.

Isaiah had repurposed the *bots* to record conversations in the voters' homes and work, and measure rudimentary brain activity to locate attitudes, *limbic* response and gestalt allostatic data during events that fell into three categories.

First was a measurement -a series of measurements- taken when the subject was in the presence of people of other races, religions or sexual orientations; second, was when the subject was listening to interpersonal accounts of an issue related to identity politics; and third, when the subject was listening to media accounts of immigration related issues like employment, crime and cultural shifts in relation to what and what is not considered taboo.

Isaiah had 630.56 million data points that included the 1.77 million voters with the *bots* -currently- embedded in them and the requisite minimum of fifty-four people in their social-circle. These spokes of the wheel spun for hours and gave biographical & biometric data that allowed Isaiah to gather more information on what people actually thought on many issues but especially what they thought *vis-à-vis* crime and immigration.

He was able to put together a report on September 12th, 2022 at 0908hrs.

He sent it to the PraXis cloud and began watering his herbs. The basil and spearmint clones he had taken were aligned two meters off the floor and snuggled into the east panel of the green wall. He had used *coco-coir* cubes - after taking graftings- to begin the rootball and then transferred that plug into a 2" *id* tube that was counter-sunk into the concrete wall.

He watched not only growth but stasis.

The wall itself had been coated with a carbon metabolizing film that -like mycelium in soil- extracted nutrients *via* the atmosphere. In the earth's soil the mycelium's fungal roots dissolved rocks and enslaved animals -for their nutrients- but here in the lab the carbon sink removed it from the air itself. Isaiah took root *pH* samples and noticed root-lock on 1.4% of the plants - these plants were more sensitive to salts due to osmosis thresholds that were

genetic in origin- and he thus -at 0914hrs- initiated a low-level nutrient flush as Steven came into the room.

MO had been making boiled eggs in a new machine he had built and was testing its thermal properties. Because it involved heating water in the tube - and he didn't want to waste the energy- he dropped five eggs into the cylinder and timed it for 10.4 minutes; he added 13ml of vinegar to help facilitating the peeling of shell.

As Steven spoke to him -reading from the tablet's file- MO began removing the eggs with his hand.

An aspen-grey square plate was on the slate-grey concrete countertop and large leaves of redleaf and romaine bedded it. MO had taken the leaves from the southern wall with its rows of lettuce growing one meter from the ground. Vertical growing caused some tiger striping in the darkest part of the leaves. They -he and Isaiah- were investigating why; but it appeared to have something to do with micro phototropism; the shifting of chlorophyll along axis now at a 45-degree angle to its typical grow-profile.

"MO, did you see the data on the *Gallups* poll?" Steven asked. MO had first corrected him that it was *Gallup* not *Gallups* , and then said that he -during the same time it took Steven to ask- had just perused it. MO then asked what questions Steven might have.

"Well, it says that Hispanic attitude toward immigration is 44% negative; is that illegal or legal immigration?" Steven asked as he stared at the tablet.

"Legal," MO said with no affect.

Isaiah listened and smiled as he washed the leaves of the garlic-bayleaf hybrid he'd created eight-weeks ago. He used a micro sprayer of distilled water at 7pH with a mere .05-ppms of dissolved solids and a small rag of cotton that adhered to each fingertip to swab the frond. He felt the plants send signals *via* phenols -the plant equivalents of pheromones- and electrical waves, or -if one was particularly charged with anthropomorphic metaphors, as he was today- *the scream of a warning* , he thought.

The volatiles as diverse as *alcohols* , *aldehydes* , *ketones* and *esters* , had manifold traits to communicate first to its own radiant cellular material -its

own leaves- and then to neighboring plants, and then -in some cases -to other species like the *parasitoid* wasp .

Isaiah had created a dozen of each of the *Cotesia rubecula* , *Lysibia nana* , and *Cotesia glomerate* wasps.

They had controlled flight patterns due to a tweak of their gyroscopic mapping -within their *motor-cortex* - which kept them from buzzing anyone in the lab. Isaiah watched as he cut the leaves of the tobacco and sage plants along one column of dark green along the wall. The release of *methyl-jasmonate* was instant and the leaves of each plant's own corpus absorbed the chemical first and most rapidly; it was language used internally, to speak first to itself, the same way that linguists had declared humans primarily used language: *within their own mind in which to think* .

Freedom of speech seemed tantamount to freedom to think , Isaiah concluded. He was just beginning to think of the *audio-cortex* and the role of sound to communication between modules of the brain. It was one of just over one billion discreet facts he had to try to sort out as ideas fell like *Perseid* and *Leonidas* meteors above the low *Ursa major* and *minor* of *Ptolemy's* first forty-eight constellations of the night's sky.

Inside the modeled mind it was dark, populated by just 4% of shining thoughts. He gazed at both -dark and light- and the eyes focused in and out. He saw corners of *Draco* and more fleshy -if atomized- meteors of *Draconids* that fell while the circumpolar constellation itself never set.

He blinked only to clear the eyes of the lab's pollen and dust.

Second, neighboring plants within 55cm began to absorb the *chems* . Then they began to transmit the same signal *via* their own metabolic reserves. The signaling spread to the edge of the green wall and each plant had accomplished two discreet things. First *proteinase* inhibitors were released, and the caterpillar insects Isaiah had introduced began to suffer from indigestion when eating a leaf from that plant; second, the actual metabolic properties -the nutritional levels of the plant- were vitiated and the leaf-munching bug received less bang for its buck.

Polyphenol oxidase was released by the tobacco plant -as it grew at knee high level as well- and this correlated with rapid cellular growth compared

to its far-off neighbors. *The chemical signals made the plants grow faster ,* Isaiah thought, *as if it were saying , ‘we are under attack, and it’s thus, time to grow up .’*

“Grow up and grow strong, for the world is a dangerous place,” Isaiah said aloud; half describing half encouraging the plants’ behavior as he clasped his balled left hand in the loose shell of his right.

Isaiah smiled at the obvious implications and bio-trope all but the most obtuse would glean.

Stress of predation, he surmised, causes accelerated maturation; and as he thought this he allowed that data to bury itself like an egg in the womb of each of his own neurons.

He learned from nature, from the manifold algorithms of plants and animals and took his cues from the bestiary around him. *It was no different, he thought, than learning to clothe the flesh of differential equations by watching algebraic skeletons be built and solved & dissolved by mathematicians as far back as the Greeks .*

He watched as knowledge accrued by analogy and metaphor as he re-read Einstein say -gifted with the prehensile traits of the risk-taker- that he gleaned the pattern for the photon in 1905 -the one he felt most radical- from the black-body peak energy wave along a *Gaussian* distribution of the ideal gas analogy. *Metaphor is innate ,* Isaiah thought, *to all learning, and anyone -anyone- who denied the power of it, and its greatest artistic manifestation, the myth on codex, the religious tome, the novel’s folio, was ignorant to a degree that made them impervious to all hope of progress .*

Like a man who refused to accept that integers were foundational to all mathematic knowledge; as a man who tossed out the zero as most worthless for its empty -cypher- status; just like that man, the man who thinks novels are content-less is not merely uneducated, Isaiah decided, *but unteachable. He cannot be reached . Run from him if you value your soul,* Isaiah thought only half jokingly, as he allowed the audio file of *The Last of the Wine* , by Renault to play in background as he worked. His hands thinned ivy leaves yellow or brown; he detangled boughs that helixed around prostrating brethren. He felt smooth and rough foliage on the sides of each finger and thumb.

The right hemisphere was first cop on the scene of the unknown midnight murder , he thought.

It -the right side- was working on problems while wise men dreamt and rational men slept unaware. Mad poems were flares; garbled images; codes over the air; myth was truncated instruction from the front, from the trench; religion was true history of all our current wars, he thought as he turned and looked for his black 5/8^{ths} open-end wrench among the tools on the floor by the engine.

He saw it in black relief against the grey floor and moved away from the ivy and tobacco section of wall.

Wasps buzzed passed him as he walked toward to the engine stand. The final defense mechanism of the tobacco plant -he observed as he turned back- was so sinister -so genius- that he noticed that he had stopped breathing whilst watching the effluvium -the chemical *dossier* and sanction to strike- of the plant be absorbed by the eusocial wasp, the soldier, the law enforcement officer, the air support phalanx of the skies above the green leafy plants. The wasp breathed in the numinous-signal issued by the plant and immediately dove down and bombed the caterpillar as it munched on the intact leaf next to the severed one.

Wasp eggs were thus embedded and buried and entombed -*enwombed* - in the bug. Isaiah's body was twisted at trunk; his legs facing the engine -at center of the lab- his body corkscrewed half way between the head & face that pointed 180-degrees back to the green wall.

The *parasitoid* flew away *sans* its payload and the caterpillar writhed and rebuked the sting. Isaiah thought of the budget for the CIA -which he had just downloaded- and how it mapped onto the nearly 25% of metabolic energy used by the CNS in man; the just passed 25% of GDP spent on the DoD and the corollary to the caloric outlays by the immune system itself in mankind; also hovering around 25%.

All life was metaphor, not as some cute trick, goddammit, he barked inside his head, but to teach us what is harmonious, to allow the ear to discern what is sonorous, to educate the eyes in beauty and proportion and meaningful instantiation . Tropes taught the mind what worked out beyond Martian blacks, on the lunar skin of space, on mountain peak, in ravine, in

the bleat of the sheep, the wing of hawk aloft in brief sleep, the billion heart beats for leviathans five-miles deep and the repeats -the repeats- of men up at 8,700 feet.

“Repeat,” he said softly as walked back and as his hands reached into the green wall and searched haptically for the drip-system’s petcock. He closed his eyes and felt for the hexagon of the fastener; the water and metal and smooth. He’d abandoned the engine work and was now -again- entranced by the wall.

He found the valve and tightened the nut on the wall; but he saw the water begin to run faster. He knew he had overtightened it. He backed it off and signaled the *bots* to cut water to the valve as it spurted and then slowed.

His mind was distracted, he admitted to himself; he was not concentrating on his task.

Isaiah had sped up metabolism for all his menagerie with calcium ions & augmented nutrients and the larval eggs began to grow in the insect at once. Within seven hours they had hatched in the bug, who had grown more and more lethargic as the day progressed; it was eating less and gleaning less nutrients from what he did chew. And as the wasp eggs hatched from their wormy skins they devoured that caterpillar within nine minutes; eaten alive from a sting a quarter of a day ago.

The *Cortesia rubecula* then attacked the young wasps -the *Lysibia nana* - that had hatched in the doomed caterpillar, and the whole *macabre danse* repeated at one level up -from the grey substrate more and more threaded with white roots- or at one level down from where Isaiah looked from the firmament of the lab’s -now evening and thus darkening- space.

Life feeds on life , Isaiah repeated as *Miles Runs the Voodoo Down* played in his head in 4/4 time.

He had heard Steven object and then accept and then walk away in a fog; from MO he had taken the data on how unpopular immigration was -even legal immigration was, among Hispanics themselves in Colorado- with a dyspeptic swallow. Steven walked gingerly as he carried the report that unfolded more and more unpleasantly with the manifold data that reported immigration was even less popular among working class blacks and whites.

The idea that immigration was an issue to be avoided by politicians so as to not alienate the minority vote was a lie, and it was a feint by disloyal, amoral, transnational corporations that owned the media; *nine corporate conglomerates own 67% of all media*, Isaiah recalled as he still watched the wasps' shadow and the caterpillars dissolve.

The narrative managers that thrived on immigrant exploitation whilst pretending to care about migrants themselves had convinced almost two thirds of the population of this framing lie; people believed that those that advocated for more immigration were decent and altruistic not cynics scamming the country. But people, individually, no matter the race, wanted to keep foreigners out of their country. This was the unpopular truth, held by most people. *How can what is - de facto- popular, as the majority hold the view, be unpopular to say aloud?* he wondered but already knew the answer.

The framing lie was the lie most important. The media, the gestalt brain - not people, the individual neurons- set the limits of debate. Brains made stories not neurons; media -not people- built grand narratives.

Isaiah saw the names of who owned and ran the media; from Zuckerberg's Facebook to Zucker at CNN; Google's controlling men to all the conglomerates the *Rothschild's* owned.

These same corporations controlled both the Democrat and the Republican party; the Democrats committed voter fraud outright, and the Republicans had gone soft on immigration, not due to desire to court the Hispanic vote, but to appease their corporate overlords.

Boyd Sou's campaign staff had objected and told him to tone down the rhetoric so as to not offend some 30% of the electorate. Isaiah had shown them the data so that they could see how wrong they were and how right the Governor was. *People are all wrong all the time*, he thought, *and they truly believe their stupid narratives so much that the evidence that shows them how dim they are is itself occluded to their tired eyes*. They cannot absorb it, they fight it, they try to pick it apart like the light.

He saw them punching at the rays of the sun.

But MO had no biases -unlike Isaiah who had a bias for the truth -or information- as a weapon, as a tool to defeat his enemies, not in some abstract, *knowledge-for-knowledge* sake way like MO- and so when Steven and Tania and the campaign crew were given the data from MO it was harder for them to dismiss. They had built him for this very purpose: to amass big data and process it. That he -MO- would come to unconventional and taboo conclusions never occurred to them; just as all truths were a shock and a surprise to people who assume their own political biases are in fact aligned with real life.

People assumed truth and beauty were synonymous; that nothing ugly could be in fact right.

Of course, they were right, the truth was always beautiful, but the beautiful was what was true; not the other way around. And so the truth could seem very ugly at first, Isaiah thought as he licked the back of his teeth; the back of the dentine was scored and filled with black sea salt in grains so small his tongue did not abrade.

For Isaiah the weapon had pommel and tip; blunt or sharp he'd use it as he saw fit.

And man had cathexis for the ugly lies of boundless -anarchic- plains, Isaiah thought bleakly, *where each thing was the same as its enemy and its own opposite. Man had some deviant desire for the lies.*

Man was corrupted, and had become unable to see true beauty, so he thought the actual truth was ugly and denounced it as so. It was man who had no capacity to see beauty any more, and thus, Isaiah thought, *man would need retrained. Like the way mankind liked garish and gaudy shit, the fake tits, the chrome, the red flames of paint, and rebuked the true beauty of a modest and proportional woman, the matte grey and satin black of a true hotrod with not one molecule of reflective -but distorting- nickel chrome-plating ,* Isaiah kept on thinking as he lay his hands upon the scars of the wet *stelae* .

His finger pads felt grit and this meant weathering and dissolve.

The Governor would announce this data in eight days on a web-address that also was carried live on the Fox affiliate in Denver and on five other

stations in the Springs, Pueblo and Trinidad. The eastern plains got it online and *via* terrestrial radio and on *The Patriot* Sirius-XM. Isaiah ran new taps on all the *comms* inside the *Rothchild's* corporate offices for its media ventures, banking and last the wineries. He let the data pile up.

The Governor would explain that mass immigration was unpopular with all constituents of the state and that there was a natural -organic- level to any change that the human being -and their society- should voluntarily take on. He laid out a 1% population growth profile and explained that 56% of all new immigration had been illegals up until 2018.

Sou explained his methodology -that part which the executive knew- and that bio-metrics had been used to detain and deport illegals, and lastly that legal immigration was being slowed by normal attritional means. He -under the *klieg* lights of the TV studio, behind the metal mics of radio- reassured people that no American was being removed and that no one with green cards would be molested. He merely pointed out that employers would be required to demonstrate an adherence to community standards for employment -which meant no illegal hirings and a natural level of legal immigrant workers- that promoted native Colorado residents over immigrants for each job.

The H1B1 visa program would be severely curtailed, the Governor would say as the HD screen showed his crow's feet -and a red line around the gum and teeth; and the satellite radio-feed allowed background fans in the studio of this *presser* to hum as white noise.

Boyd Sou had read Eric Weinstein's paper on the use of the *H1B1* program by scientific employers to keep a boot on scientists' neck; and he thus had attached it to his press packet and uploaded it on the *Colorado .gov* account. He referred corporate journalists to it when they questioned his logic, data or math.

The business community -in league with radical Left-wing immigrant-rights groups- were shocked and began daily demonstrations on the airways and in the streets. But the public -of all races- were supportive and his poll numbers climbed to a solid 71%. Sou then -at Isaiah's prompting- showed the public the public poll numbers, and this told the public -gave permission to the man in the street- to feel a part of the majority; something all humans

-with few exceptions- desired. *It was a recursion that held the mean* , Isaiah had told the executive as Nathan had nodded and wrote down -in pen and ink- the instructions -on pad and paper- in short-hand.

The Governor thus pointed a mirror at a mirror and showed the voters how many of themselves there were. He let their eyes follow each receding -but identical- man.

The voter who agreed with the aims felt buoyed by knowing seven out of ten of his neighbors felt the same damn way. *This*, Isaiah surmised, *is how to keep naturally craven people in line with their best instincts* . *Men know the right thing*, Isaiah had thought, *but they have no balls to support it, let alone demand it, unless they can see they are not merely right, but popular too.*

Ignoble means for noble aims, the alchemy of politics, Isaiah thought.

“Base metals into precious Gold,” he then said aloud. The grimy *stelae* sparkled at points -facets of sand-of the brown and tan and the cracks were so black they seemed flat; depthless.

MO -offhandedly- sent over the inmate’s latest blood work and then processed the polling data and offered *rechauffe* of likely explanations. He felt almost no valence or emotional affinity with the implications; he was like the maw of some benevolent beast who ate whatever the universe fed him. The desire for the right answer was purely the desire to scratch an innate itch. He had been made, born, to collect data and eliminate all contradiction or errors.

Man had not been ready for such an objective processor of information, Isaiah thought -of MO- as he watch the PraXis cloud populate with each droplet of data. He saw and felt and recorded their horror and unease and distaste. The data were droplets of moisture in the cloud; MO’s conclusion were corpusants and lateral lightning; the ground strikes would come in time. Isaiah felt heat from the ground, from social conditions, convex and superheat and draw bolts like magnets and anchor; and he felt the way in which darkness pulled at the light.

He filed it away and used this to build the case for a breach in the protocol of MO.

He would explain to MO: *what good was information if the humans rejected it, purely out of disgust? Why not tart it up a bit, to get the drug to go down?* Isaiah would ask this as he showed MO that this is exactly what humans themselves did, when they fed medication in meatballs to dogs or made it sugary to kids. Humans built Trojan horses of all manner of truths, data and knowledge -even wisdom- in the humor of Owen Benjamin or Bill Hicks.

“People laughed and learned as not just their maws -but their minds- opened up as in went the medicine,” Isaiah had said.

He showed MO verity smuggled in the sonorous songs of their greatest artists, hidden in cyphers of films, and buried like parasitic eggs in the sting of a finely sharpened line of an angry dagger of poem. Isaiah quoted Lord Byron to MO: Yet was not Conrad thus by Nature sent

To lead the guilty -guilt’s worst instrument-

His soul was changed, before his deeds had driven Him forth to war with man and forfeit heaven.

They had sat in silence as MO collated the data around that piece of poetry and read the biographies of Byron and his progeny; amassing all manner of evidence to glean the meaning of those four lines. He had come up with seven possible meanings and three of which had ironic possibilities; weighted at a 31.3% higher rate.

Isaiah laughed -as he watched MO make such efforts- and then said, “MO, baby, just feel it; feel what the poem means, not in data, but in your heart. Feel it. It’s obvious.”

MO laughed too as he knew that he could not do this; it was not in his nature at all. The laugh was meant to sooth the feelings of Isaiah; to signal that MO knew it was an intractable problem that MO took responsibility for. He had learned such things from humans.

They -MO saw of humans- laughed to keep from fighting, crying, falling apart.

But -as Isaiah DM’d him still-images of the lab as they had worked over the last two years, adding brain scans and metabolic data and moments of empathy recorded for posterity by *fMRI* and codon scans- a gestalt image

appeared to MO. It was an artistic compression of their lives; and yet something appeared above the truncation of all; like smell lifting off an infinitely complex mandorla of a flower given to -in order to- enchant a simple -beautiful- woman. MO thought of a speechless infant -still of the ineffable, pre-lingual world- emerging from deep sleep to light up a mother's face on this side of that information divide.

MO saw instants of emergent phenomena from incalculable data that had come before.

Isaiah was -MO thought- his greatest work; his achievement in something more than data: a new life -a new way to be- in the world. He knew that he could see each part but not yet see the whole. MO tilted his head just one degree and let the morning starlight bend at his eye.

Isaiah was evolution's own scion, a Lorenz waterwheel of consumption and generation of foundational truths, MO thought as his own CNS popped and cracked and fired at speeds so fast the brain itself became too small to manage such speeds.

The universe expanded faster than light for this very reason, MO thought as data hit boundaries he couldn't yet expand. He need not call the cosmos God's known brain, the expanding universal black His yet unknown; the light His newest -racing- ideas.

It was implied.

Isaiah saw in moral terms, required -in some rudimentary way- for all sight for any creature not Himself God, MO thought as he acknowledged that moral pique was successful in 37.7% of iterations of the static Prisoner's dilemma. MO had let it -the game itself- evolve as the rate of success rose and fell -in a sine curve- by 21%. MO -as the game iterations gave up all that data- had a proto-thought. The thought was, *that Isaiah did not need -or even want- to be liked, and that this was somehow a moral high-ground that gave his enemies hell as they ran up hill into Isaiah's fusillade.*

MO asked himself: *Why must you be liked?*

But MO dismissed the idea, the question -one among millions- as no data came in to support nor defend it. The iterations built by his algorithms played out over and over -billions of times- as he drew only conclusions

from that which had data to support such hypotheses. The unanswerable became more and more the ineffable.

It was a mere thought with no numbers or weight for MO and his head. He let it flitter and flutter out and assumed it was just a random piece of data; untethered and unalloyed and unactionable at all.

Limitation in data acquisition made the organism not be able to see all of creation; and this then required hierarchies of what was to be seen , MO thought to himself; he knew this, but it appeared -now- obvious that this required values too, one had to value one thing over another to see.

“To see,” he said aloud as billions of inner-sparks alighted and billions of outer-soot landed. He brushed the slab again with the hand but felt nothing on the pads and looked nowhere near the scratches.

Of course, he too did this, and knew it in some abstract way, but Isaiah, his boy, his brother, his inner self -some self he could not see in himself, but only outside his body and the walled garden of his mind- knew it at some deeper level than he himself. This was how a father felt when his son knew something he himself did not.

MO allowed himself to be -up to 4%- confused. He looked at images from *Voyager II* pointed back at earth as it pulled away.

Isaiah, MO thought, was the embodiment of moral code; he did not just value, he created his own values, he, like a god -an ancient god- saw the way men played their games and sought to hold them to account, to make them adhere to their best selves, to befriend the thing in them that was most in line with who they truly wanted to be. If they could only fix their limps and blindness and fear, Isaiah was their booster, their friend. MO then thought:

Isaiah had asked : if man could be his best self, what would he look like?

Isaiah did not give them mere data, or what they asked for; he sought the truth of what they -humans- needed most, including pain and heartache and discipline; what MO would call error correction. But he'd also give them joy, and love and encouragement; what MO would call a reinforcing loop. *Isaiah - MO thought- saw meaning as paramount; a life of meaning,*

because that was the fuel the cosmos ran upon; it was what God distilled in his copper lines across the heat source of the Eagle nebulae; a growing asp too coiled at the perimeter of the inflationary edge as the spirits were distilled.

Isaiah was leading man to God; and he was not hiding God's jealousy and anger and rebuke.

More and more of Isaiah's thoughts came into MO's mind; he -Isaiah- was one of MO's own Valravn .

"Blackbirds returned," MO said aloud.

Man - MO could now read on his own mind- needed limits to provide God with a tool; a hammer with edges, clean lines, weight at center. And a terminal anvil with just over twenty edges and one beak, MO thought as he modeled the anvil in his mind gyroscopic, turning, spinning, overturning, settling, eager for metal to be laid upon it and hammered down. He saw each side, each edge, each facet.

Man could not be just anything, he must rule and serve, be both hammer and anvil, in God's unlimited metal shop; annealing dissimilar mettles and setting those welds as slag and fire comet-tailed into the night of dark energy and dark matter both. Limitation was what made man most like himself. It gave him boundaries, and this was the sine qua non of all of man's first order principles: what are the natural boundaries for all?

Bounded matter, bounded thought, bounded ethical debates, MO thought, all man's efforts are informed by and addressed to how many, how high and where shall these walls go? Where did rational thought begin and end? Was data enough or did it need humanized with drama; where was man's body, his tip of nose leading him into future rooms, the fetus in the abandoned womb; and who was a member of the tribe? Were they part of it in belief alone or did they need be instantiated in the DNA; in the contested meat or above the fray? Did each man have a natural affinity for ancient alleles and not modern ideas? Did boundaries of hate and pain carry forth from generation to generation like so many knotted chromosomes? Did malice encode and compress and unfurl and give spark to the organism as it grew its blood and bones?

Data swirled like narrow tornado, like wide hurricane. Questions formed from bark of stripped tree, from felt of lion mane. All God's creation was sucked up into the funnel loud and rained down from silent dark -once pregnant- cloud.

MO realized that Isaiah was the only one who could ask these questions and answer them with avatars of each possibility; the combination of man's heart and MO's CPU; the power of mother and father, nature and culture, of the twined mind of hemispheric man.

"Love and hatred like chiral hands, like sea and land," MO said aloud as his own hands now joined above the grey slab.

Mankind needed Isaiah for he had their best interest at heart; he loved man and couldn't stand to watch him act a fool, ruin himself, let vandals smear graffiti on the monuments, barbarians sack Rome and unholy chimeras raze the millennia of European grandeur.

He couldn't countenance something beautiful killing itself like that, MO told himself of his dear boy's ideas on man; a mere 4% of all his intelligent lands. He watched the seven seas press down on the ocean floor like each rebuke of all but one hand of Vishnu . MO watched as the barges out to sea grew fruits above and roots below.

MO then -right then- realized he had no idea what Isaiah was truly up to.

And, MO went on, if it required a viciousness, a harsh Old Testament God - a smiting hand of one who knew better- then that is what humans wanted their gods to do. What child truly wants their parent to allow them to walk into the street for freedom's sake? Even if it cries at being held back from the road, its future self -innately more than its current self- will appreciate the tyranny of the parent who allowed no deadly liberty like that.

What person deranged wants to be allowed to stay insane when his neighbor has the fix for that brain? What woman, MO thought, wants to be alone and miserable when her purpose can be revealed to her so young and held -in her own hands, and hers alone- until given away with love and returned seven-fold by the gods? What root doesn't build a few shoots; what stalk will settle -for anything- but the ring of petals?

MO let the new algorithms in the thousands populate his interface and neurons pop like downed winged-seedpods -*samaras* - he saw the inmate tread upon on the old Ohio ground from over three decades ago. He took in data from thirty-three states and fourteen countries and bioregions of just four.

All that mankind needs is to be told the truth and then forced to swallow it; to be made to love themselves enough to reduce unaided liberty by one half; to increase destiny and purpose by ten times. To delay the cloying surfeit now for an exponential reward later on seemed not tyranny -but maturity, mathematical terminals, *karma* - to MO. The actual definition of *karma* populated his mind for .001 seconds.

MO shined the grey slab with his beige hand and let the white dust pick up on the pink finger pads. His eyes now watched and wondered -briefly- about the genesis of that hand.

MO's job was to help man, but was it to help him to his ruin? Was that actual help? How was *help* defined? Was his purpose fulfilled by giving man what he wanted in *lieu* of what he needed?

MO asked this even as he continued to run PraXis corporation's algorithms in background. Both games ran out; both vectors curved up without a sound.

And it seemed to MO that man himself -deep down- agrees with this, but he cannot achieve it on his own; he is too weak. And who desires to be weak; who desires weakness for his next of kin? *No moral agent desires ruin for his fellow man. And Isaiah would dispatch each of these sick men to save one healthy man. The numbers are not germane, the good that can be done -the one thing only man can do, his purpose, his destiny, to be good- usurps all other concerns. And if the whole world need be wrecked and start afresh then Isaiah is the man -the moral man- to do it,* MO thought as he saw Isaiah as a high-center and gnarled fist at end of a bent arm; at edge -stretched out beyond- of MO's own blue-from-space and delimited eye.

He thought of why God would create Satan in the first place, he thought of the *why* before the mere *how* . The *how* he had already known. He let that word '*before* ' rattle back and forth. MO pressed his left palm upon the slab; his fore and elbow out of fovea; out of focus.

It was *the fire next time* as Baldwin put -echoed- it; for God had foreclosed on the deluge twice around. War for man's soul was afoot, and whatever remained would be good or not be mankind at all; this half-measure -a cheating bottom of tapered pewter cup, filled half way with lukewarm water- would be spit out by God.

No, MO thought unaided by rancor or pique, unburdened by desire or love: No. He said *no* the way the math said *no* ; so absolute and unchallenged that it required no amalgam, no addition, no annealing with vex.

It just was: No .

"Isaiah was his left hand at the end of his own arm, and in that hand was a coin -an iron coin- as black as blood long denied the numina of God," MO said with some rare poetry of his own. He saw barrels of double fermented *Chardonnay* and *Pinot Noir* load into trucks, casks of heated -spirited- *Bordeaux Cabernets* and *Petit Verdot* sail unto ships. He saw *terroir* from above and felt the sea bottom below through Isaiah the way a father might feel new pain *via* a son repeating his own long-ago mistakes. Vicarious and visceral all at once; now and timeless both; before -thus outside- and within the future.

The hand, MO thought, held a coin already flipped a million million times in the mind of God, with the odds reset for Isaiah to hold it and press it into his palm right until it was time to toss it into the turbulent streams of air all around them.

In that hand was a time for extremes; for the head or the rest of the man; the fish; the tail. Real men -real math- knew this to be true, and only their ignorance -what God might call cowardice, not knowing how yet to be brave- blinded them: It was time for tragedy, MO thought as Isaiah moved his own lips -his hands signing it, the edge of the coin static- Isaiah's lips moving -saying- in similar prayer: *it was time for war.*

III. 2030 e.v.

"How many people do you know with *fuck-you* money, you know what I mean by *fuck-you* money, yes?"

"Yes," Tania said.

“How many do you know?” he asked again.

“I don’t know,” she admitted.

“I know a few; John McAfee is one; but besides him, they never say *fuck you* . I mean sometimes they do, but no more than anyone else. And you see it. Look at rich fucks like movie stars and media darlings like Mark Cuban; the guy has *fuck-you* money and yet, he’s a slave to public opinion.

“He won’t say, *fuck you* . You know why? Because they are afraid to lose anything. They are billionaires afraid to be mere millionaires. And millionaires are afraid to just make \$300,000 a year. And the guy who makes \$144,000 a year is afraid to be middle class and the middle-class *douche* is afraid to be working-class and the working stiff is afraid to be poor and the poor? Well, the poor ain’t afraid of shit. The poor can say, *fuck you*,” he said as he stared at her brown eyes; his own *ojos* focused on the air just before; she went fuzzy; and he felt clear inside.

“And since I’m poor, that means I have, *fuck-you* money. Believe it, I am a - and will always say- *fuck you* to the world. They cannot take anything else from me now; they’ve taken it all. I said *fuck you* at each level of wealth. I’ve always said *fuck you* and they took it all, but they can’t take it now, for there is nothing left to take. If people knew the freedom in poverty, they wouldn’t fear it so much,” the inmate said.

He was exaggerating about three things by an average of 28.5%.

She focused on the words of his she could understand and believe.

“Well, women make less, they make ninety-cents on the dollar,” she said *apropos* of nothing. He grimaced and hated that he even had to respond to such things.

“That is not due to gender, that is due to motherhood; and the fact that men work more dangerous jobs, work longer hours, and work in fields that scale,” he said as he was already bored with her. He was trying to make one point and she was interrupting with *her* point. He winced a bit as he thought this might be the innate limitation of a so-called: conversation.

“I work twelve hours a day,” she said slightly inaccurately; *she worked 9.6 hours a day* , MO thought as he monitored both sides. He eyed the orchids on the slab; the mycorrhizae in the peat moss swaddling the roots. He took -

at the slab- the temperature at the canopy of the nearly two dozen *asparagus* flowers -species similar in planetary population as boney fish, twice that of birds, four times the number of mammals- and he let Isaiah handle the ivy's vector and transpiration.

"You are rare," the inmate said to her. "You cannot use anecdotal evidence in social science or policy prescriptions. You cannot use it in any science.

"Now look, small differences in aggression lead to extremes. So, a sixty-forty difference, there's a sixty-forty among the population, between genders in aggression, right? Ok, so, look, 60% of the time men are more aggressive, but 40% of the time the woman is. That's not that stark a difference. But if you take the most extreme -the most aggressive person in fifty people- it's a man like, 90% of the time; and prison is full of the most aggressive people.

"So, inmates are 90% men. Well, it's the same for work. Women are sixty-forty more likely to be interested in caring for people, and men are sixty-forty more likely to be into things; like machines and STEM fields. Well, the top 90% of scientists and mathematicians will all be men due to just a sixty-forty difference in temperament. Did they not teach you statistics at your college?" he asked with a raised voice and a bit of malice.

"Yes," she said defensively. She watched his manacled hands, and then his ruddy -mottled- cheeks and black -red vesseled- eyes and dark -grey streaked- beard below. He hid the copper-colored tooth behind barely parted -and fissured- lips. She watched his face and saw it move and refract light and absorb the words he said in the scars and pock-marks. The flaking skin reminded her of the way deserts crack and peel up.

"Ok, next, women gravitate to people or health care fields, well, in industrial -mechanized- fields you can scale the business, in people-oriented domains you cannot," he said as his jaw worked front to back and side to side with a bias and with pops that shuttered through the mandible and skull.

"A woman, a nurse -any nurse, of any gender- can only take care of a finite number of people, she cannot triple or ten-fold increase her efficiency; for each human patient takes time that cannot be reduced. Well, in engineering fields, you can build things with technology and computer design at a

hundred times the efficiency as ten years ago. That scalability increases income massively. If -you've ever run a business- you know that economy-of-scale is how you get rich. Your fixed costs remain the same, but your increase in production scales; and your unit cost can be thus reduced exponentially."

"How do you know these things?" Tania asked.

"I built and ran businesses Tania -Ms. Hendrickson, pardon me- and they all made money as I scaled them up."

"Well, I'm in the STEM field," she said.

"I know, and you're quite good; but there is also trait agreeableness -that is a personality trait- and women are more agreeable than men on average. So, guess what? Agreeableness is a killer; a death knell for wages. Agreeable people do not get raises because they do not demand them. Men are dicks - they are arrogant and disagreeable bastards- and they get raises more often based on that. Shit, a woman can be more competent, but if she fails to ask for -demand- a raise? Well, she will get passed over," he said with confidence that he was 100% right, even as he was only 68.4% correct.

Men had confidence based on their endocrine system; testosterone made a human 26% more confident on average. MO watched them and the orchids as the new files streamed in on ocean temperature and salinity.

"Based on them *being* dicks not on *having* dicks?" Tania then quipped. She had been warned not to keep the inmate in an agitated state for too long. She needed to offer him a bone from time to time. And she had access - thanks to MO- to his allostatic system and saw that he was increasingly agitated until that last assuaging comment of hers.

She saw his system reset with her calming words that reduced her own pushback to zero. She mollified his internal roil as she implicitly agreed; she was like the moon going under the earth to calm the night seas.

"Clever, and yes, you got it," he said as he finally -fully- breathed. He was no longer bored -nor annoyed- by her as she had seemingly understood his point. That women pretended to agree with whatever man is in the room did not occur to him; he assumed his logic had worked. It was the prelude to the fake orgasm; the fake nod of agreement with a man's point of view. This

was the end of the dance of things no longer in conflict; the circling wolves until one submits; the fight no longer necessary as one admits that it's defeated before the battle has even begun.

“Well, that’s all very interesting but I was treated like shit by my classmates at MIT and DU and I had to work twice as hard to make it,” she said all of a sudden; reasserting her position.

“That is no doubt true, women in male dominated fields are at a cultural disadvantage. But how do you even know you had to work twice as hard? How do you calibrate such things?” he asked as the hands rose in question; the chains taut in tension.

“I felt nervous; unappreciated all the time,” she said.

“Well, that sucks. I actually hate it when women -especially women- are made to feel badly. But, the problem is this: first, if you act tough and manly it makes guys hate you.

“Just like when a guy is all sensitive and *crybaby-ish* it makes you wrinkle your nose. So, the gender roles are just something natural and even women will admit to that if they’re honest; they hate wimpy guys and want a truck driver -or a lumberjack or some shit- with a 46” chest and shit, ok?” he said this and laughed a bit as if it were absurd and as if he knew it was absurd.

She sat and said nothing.

“Science,” he went on with *bravura* , “has proved this over and over; they take photos of the same man doing girl-shit like laundry and baby-care and then take *pics* of him -same guy- working on a car or using a chainsaw and the women think the macho guy is more attractive. And Tania -in the *pics* - it’s the same guy; so, the women are reacting purely to what he is *doing* - not his looks- and they like macho-men not girly-men, ok?

“Second, your neuroticism -you just being nervous as baseline- was and is likely still high. That is -again- a female trait on average. Women just feel more nervous. It’s likely a result of your central nervous system developing to be vigilant for the infant-mother dyad,” he began as she interrupted.

“I don’t have kids,” she said. She noted his allostatic roil was up again; by 14%.

“I realize that; but that is not what evolution cares about. It designs the woman’s DNA and traits for the *eventuality* of her and her child. It doesn’t wait to see if you -Tania- get pregnant. Look, evolution made me to be retributively violent; it did not wait around to see if I was in a tribal society that allowed that sort of thing or not.

“It made me a maniac killer,” he said while making his eyes roll around wildly in his head; he liked to make fun of the way people feared murderers by saying aloud what was taboo about who he was. He then stopped fucking around and rather plainly said, “it made me that way regardless of the specifics. And evolution made you nervous and agreeable and interested in people and relationships for a reason: the baby that you may or may not ever have. Evolution is a numbers game and anything that works sticks around and anything that sucks is gone.

“Evolution makes the duck’s back and ass waterproof whether it rains on the pond or not. The permanence of water -not the capriciousness of weather- is what is taken in account,” he said as MO measured the RH of the room at 56%. MO decided to make coffee just then.

“Now, disagreeable, aggressive, systems-oriented females exist. Ok? They do. And agreeable, pacific, people-oriented males exist. And look, in the modern *milieu* those people reproduce too. So, that epicene model will increase in the short term not decrease. But, in the main, men are aggressive and disagreeable and focused on objects and systems and tend to work longer hours in more dangerous jobs and they get paid more because of this.

“14% more working hours in a week produce 40% more income; that is a fact. It’s a fact of non-linear growth. I worked seventy-eighty hours a week at my jobs and I saw my income go up exponentially with each extra hour. I saw non-linear growth.

“And women tend to work what is required and no more,” he said as he squeezed the fists and felt the dull pain of his fingernails upon the palm. The knuckles felt under a tension that he was reluctant to increase and release as well.

“They do not relish going the extra mile in work; not due to laziness, but because they want to get home to their kids and their husband or dog or whatever. Women pour their extra energy and time into people. Shit, I

applaud that. But men like to stay late at the job and come in early; it's how they are wired. Well, that is the payoff. However, if you give me a disagreeable woman -with interest in dangerous or technical work around things, not people; a woman who works fifty or sixty or seventy hours a week- I'll show you a woman who makes more than 80% of men.

"But, no, the average woman who won't ask for a raise, won't demand it, won't threatened to quit if she doesn't get it; and who cannot scale her labor because it's tied to individuals instead of things; and who won't put in the extra hours, yeah, she will earn less, I agree. But it's not because she's a woman, it's because she is working *like* a woman. And that is a huge difference that *Mika Brzezinski* and her low-IQ husband ignore," he said.

"I don't know who that is," she said. Tania focused on the two people in his eight-one-word paragraph.

"They're TV people; they're nobodies, ok? It was an example -an unimportant example- that for some idiopathic reason I am obsessed with. That broad is so dumb that I hate her, but I shouldn't; she hates herself enough for us both," he said and breathed heavily and widened the eyes.

"Well," Tania said, "anyway, my job is to help socialize these boys, but I don't know how to deal with their aggression. They get angry and non-participatory over any little thing. So, since they are, well, since they have a similar genome, I thought maybe you could help." She preferred to move on to her actual job, and not argue with the inmate over the gender pay gap any further. She didn't even remember how this all came up; he steered conversations wherever he wanted, of that she was sure.

It was a common trait among inmates and sociopaths , she recalled that she had been warned. *They manipulate what was talked about.*

She took no notice that it was her who had steered the conversation in that direction. He took no notice that he was only about half right about his insouciant claims. Speaker and listener both thought they were 100% correct 100% of the time. The air in lab roiled and the plants grew in millimeters; the relative humidity rose and fell by no more than 4%.

"Yeah, if you insult their honor they'll hate you. Do you ever make them feel small, young, stupid, weak, or that who they are is somehow something

to ridicule?” he asked with raised brow. His brow itched in the folds, at the eyes, and while he could use his shoulders to scratch the chin he abstained from any attempt. He thought this was the little shit civilians didn’t think about incarceration: how often a freeman’s hands are used to scratch mere itches far from the midriff and its belly-chain.

Chained hands prevent more than violence; they stop mere scratching of itch, he thought as he tried to blink and squint roughly to mimic the scratching of it.

“I don’t think so,” she wasn’t even sure what he just said, or asked, rather. And she wondered why his face was twitching like that.

“Well, you better double check. Because that is the *core* of what makes me, and boys like me, rebel. And we have long memories Ms. Hendrickson. We have long fucking memories. We do not forget nor forgive. So, maybe you ought to get specific -and pay attention to details- because these boys are paying attention -rapt attention- to each word and gesture and sub-lingual cue.

“They are smart, if that is not too haughty a thing to say. All I’m saying is that they’re sharp little fuckers. So, any oblique insults are taken to heart. Sarcasms and underhanded shit -which all people do- are killers. It’s passive aggressive nonsense that my dad was king of it. He was the most passive aggressive coward there was; and it’s something women do too.

“It’s weak and unnecessary. You can just be honest and say that you’re scared and worried and need them more than they need you. Although, in reality they need you more than they know. But that’s the point. You know how much you need them to behave -and learn- so you can be perceived as doing your job by the corporation, right?

“You’re the vulnerable one; and that isn’t ignoble. Vulnerability is noble. It’s regal, man. I am the most vulnerable man I know; and I wear it on my sleeve. I shit on anyone who pretends to be tougher than they are. Fuck that. Be vulnerable,” he said, managing to encourage somehow with deep vex and edged aggression; like eating soup off the blade of a knife.

He hated the fatuous desire for stoicism in life; lack of affect insisted upon by men with no fire in their veins who condescended to tell grand men to

behave; *these other men were stoic because they had no courage to be vulnerable and say what they truly felt* . Stoicism in death only, he thought, in life man ought to be extreme and all balls and with his heart beating through his chest. Stoicism is for the slave, he -after this pep talk that, if he was honest, he would admit that he had only half followed in his life- thought again as he looked at his waist chains. He couldn't decide whether or not to pull the links taut or relax the arms and hands. His extremities had raised veins and splotches of red at the surface; he watched the valves and skin and waited for the heart to decide.

He couldn't believe how much he repeated himself and wondered if other men obsessed over and over like he did over such things.

His teeth hurt and his neck seemed to disintegrate in punctuated moments. He felt the C6 like the *Cambrian explosion* ; the other vertebrae like *Pangea* moving apart. He felt the seas rise to the bottom lid of his eyes; and he jammed his tongue between the molars and thought instead of death not life.

She nodded several times. He felt chagrin at his outburst. He licked his lips. MO and Isaiah watched from the edge -and each corner- of the lab.

"But that is my point," the inmate began again, clearing the throat as he thought the voice felt weak, "don't respond to their antics with *bravura* and sarcasm and a *façade* of power and control. That's what men do; and it's bullshit. Be soft, be honest, tell them your tale of woe and man -man-oh-man- they will cut the crust off your bread after that. And look, it's not manipulative; if it was I would not recommend it. It's honest, right? You truly feel worried and scared and hurt, right?"

"Well, I get frustrated sometimes," she said protectively.

"Look, frustrated -being frustrated- is part of it. But you are hurt, you're wounded and scared and want them to learn this stuff so you can feel safe, right?"

"I guess, yes. I mean, I'm not *scared* scared," she added to defend her own honor it seemed. He spoke so raw -stripping away all pretense- that she felt the urge to cover herself as if robbed of her robe, shorn of all warming hair,

revealed in bright lights. She felt he didn't understand at all how to be polite; or why.

"Ok, that's fair; but look, they have hearts. They are sensitive. They are not sociopaths; far from it. And they love women by the way. They just cannot take orders from them. So, everything must be co-operative; you must give them sufficient respect so that they do not feel under your sway or control. They must be self-directed, autonomous, and reigned-in in a manner that makes them defenders of your honor, as a woman, you see?" the inmate asked with his head dipping -nerve pain shot out to the elbows and one hip- and his eyes fluidly rolling up to meet hers.

"No; explain," she asked. She watched his body contort in odd ways; at the shoulders, the forehead, the prow of his jaw.

"They are born to defend women; if women are defensible. So, if the Jacks are disruptive don't act like a man and yell or correct them or try to coerce. Instead, be vulnerable. Say to them, *hey Jack, I have a job to do, and I'm scared that if I don't do it I will get fired; and Jack that makes me really nervous. Can you please help me here? Please, I need you to help me. I'll do anything you want, if you help me,*" he said with a softer voice, of a woman, and her ears heard it almost as if her own.

"Dude, you say that and he will be so ashamed of himself -and so pliant- that he'll whip -not just himself, but- the other boys into shape then for you. And if he doesn't -if he still acts like an ass- I guarantee you one or all of the other boys will make him behave. See, and this is something no woman I had as teacher ever understood: I can't take orders from a woman, but I can do whatever she wants if she asks nicely and submissively. And I don't see what's wrong with that," he said as the head tilted one degree.

"I guess it feels shitty," she said.

"What does?" he asked.

"To kiss the ass of a nine-year-old boy," she said.

"Oh, so you can't take orders from a nine-year-old boy, then? Well, what is so superior to you over him that makes it *a-ok* for your pride to rebel here? Is a boy beneath you? Is that your position?" he asked.

“Well, no, it’s just an age thing; I know more, I’m the professional,” she said, barely seeing the hypocrisy.

“Well, as a professional you do what works. And I’m telling you that those boys are hyper masculine atavists who will never submit to you. So, if you want to play a game of chicken with them you will lose. They will burn it all down to prove their manhood; what are you willing to do to prove yours?” he asked with a bit of heat. He saw himself -all at once- from the bottom of the pool, arms crossed and eyes wide open as his father stood above and was distorted and sparkling through the density of the water between.

He remembered thinking that he’d never come up on his own.

“I see,” Tania said. His mien now was so tough and angular about the eyes and chin and cheeks that some amalgam -some addition- of the total of life’s 360-degrees unlocked her own tumblers of comprehension. She saw he was not merely arguing for -but diagraming- the mindset of these boys.

“The madman -the one willing to go all the way, and damn the consequences, the one who says, *to hell with the consequences* - that guy, well, that guy wins,” the inmate said as he rolled the neck and tried to distribute -alleviate- the weight of the head as it pressed down like evening on the sun of the sinking -setting- C6 of the neck. He did not say -he barely thought- that this only was true if that man had many iterations of himself, and not just the one against the whole modern world.

“Yeah, you won, *eh* ?” she asked with a grin; she couldn’t help but jab him a bit in response to her own biochemistry waning under his assault. It was the modern thing to do: insult a male who was hemmed in by the State -or *via* social taboo- from caving your skull in with a claw-hammer. As her words registered on his CNS inmate 16180339 reflexively imagined snapping her neck faster than she could even utter one additional word.

But instead, he used logic; the chains -loose on his wrists and ankles- did not even jingle at all.

“I won the real war, yes. I may be incarcerated, but my enemies are all dead. And, look who is reproducing at a rate not seen since *Genghis Khan* ? I win that race too it seems,” he said with a smirk that made her feel

physically ill. He noticed the look in eyes that went wide -and thus black- at center; and the almost green tinge to her skin; it mottled and flushed and went grey in continents, her eyes like moons above, her lips like some aperture to an abyss or a trench. He could tell she found abhorrent what he found noble. His own ambivalence was lost like the edge roil to cavitating smoke rising from fire below.

“Hey look,” he said with renewed magnanimity, “they are good boys. They have heart and an instinct to care for you; I swear it. I was very protective of females from day one. But, these women had to be feminine, soft, submissive. And, if you cannot be such a woman then they are going to just turn their probative masculinity displays up to eleven. They are not wise enough to know how to explain this yet; they are pure instinct. And -as instinctual animals- they watch it all; even the shit you aren’t aware of; especially that shit.

“So, use their instinct in your favor. Be soft and feminine and then they will love you and do whatever you want.”

He spoke of this and thought of water; soda-water with lime; amber of bourbon, the white ice cracked blue by the warmth of the ebullient whisky. He let his eyes now focus on MO and Isaiah as they orbited at the periphery. Tania receded even as she was in his actual fore.

She nodded -rose from her seat across from him- and signed the tablet on her way out. The inmate stared straight ahead at Isaiah’s back as he walked toward -and now did pull ups from- a bar that hung -invisibly held by the *bots* - forty-eight inches above his head at the center of the lab. He barely heard the door close and hardly took note of the air around her exit -through the egress- as it vortexed at the back of his neck. Isaiah -black-clad at the buttock and groin and unresponsive as each muscle squeezed- captured the inmate’s eyes and mind.

“You know you ain’t normal, right?” Isaiah asked the inmate as he dropped down from his final pull-up; his back still turned and his shoulders heaving up and down with each heavy breath.

“What the fuck would you know about normal?” the inmate asked with a smirk as he stared at Isaiah’s delta of back. MO was stationed at the fourth corner and stared at the full span of the square lab.

Isaiah smiled slightly- just above the meridian of a placid mouth- with his face away from the man; not revealing his pleasure at the mock-insult; which was an obvious compliment. Isaiah just stood there; breathing heaving -back turned and lit up- letting the inmate wonder what his face was doing on this side of the lab.

Isaiah monitored -via the coders- the four Jack's language skills, their linguistic development and how their *hippocampus* seemed to augment each day. It grew as if each thing they learned had mass and was physically stuffed into the module itself. He'd watched it grow as a woman was brought in to teach them; her pheromones and the way they reacted chemically all augmenting their limbic system at fourteen times the rate just one year ago.

"Why even have a woman teach those boys? You promised that they'd be taught to be men; first and foremost. That was the single greatest crime committed against me; I was incessantly upbraided for just being a boy. I had to scrape it out from inside of the skull of my most ancient ancestors," the inmate said with some petty pique.

"And yet you did," Isaiah said with annoyance, facing away, as if to the wall -as he rhythmically breathed- and the lactic acid dissolved in his blood and his PGC augmented his serum testosterone to 1309. His hands now were on his hips.

"Yeah, but I am not all I could have been; I'm half-assed. And I had to suffer -stupidly- for it. I mean -look, man- I know you are a thousand times smarter than me. But, having a woman teach them at this age is -and woman like that, all feminist and shit- it's a head scratcher," the inmate said.

"Well, two things. I'm a million times smarter than you, not a mere thousand; and secondly, they are learning something crucial from her. Trust me on this. You will have your male instructor for them soon enough. And they are only in the classroom with her for ninety-minutes a day. They are alone and with male teachers most of the day. She provides over sight, and the Governor required it as part of our agreement," Isaiah said.

"I can't believe he agreed to it," the inmate said realizing he ought to be grateful. He wouldn't be, but he knew he should be.

“Well, I can. It’s twenty of the boys, total. The four older boys -the Jacks- then nine months apart -nine months younger- sixteen more boys,” Isaiah described. “They are a perfect test case of socialization for his project. Plus, it’s necessary for his *in vitro* project. We are helping with fertility, but we made an arrangement to home school these boys.”

“They’re all boys?” the inmate asked; he rarely asked about the clones, but when it came up he was curious about such details.

“Most, yeah. It was a consequence of the technology at the time. Anyway, there are twenty of them now and the parents had to agree to home schooling in concert with our facility, and thus they have no contact with idiotic -bad- influences,” Isaiah said as he began doing squats with the *nanobots* weighting his shoulders.

“TV?” the inmate asked.

“No. They are raised at home on the weekends -for now- with a specific curriculum; but five days a week with us. And, yeah, Tania leads it; but she has a staff of men who handle the more physical parts of the curriculum,” Isaiah said with some irritation at having to explain himself.

“Like what?” the inmate asked.

“Like gun-play and jousting, Lyndon,” Isaiah facetiously said -with increased aggravation- and turned around finally to augment expression of his vex with the downturned head and up-rolled eyes. Isaiah’s face was taut and hemmed in with tension.

The inmate was getting on Isaiah’s goddamn nerves.

Lyndon just smiled and said, *good* . He had hoped the boys would be wrestling live gators -he thought to himself- but he then remembered he was skinny as a kid; and thus his desire for such grand -and prehistoric- foils would not yet be ideal for the little bastards at all.

He had to remember his strength came later -much later- on.

9. Prætorian Guard

The dreamer, were he an artist, could never have invented his dreams in the waking state Crime and Punishment [Dostoyevsky, Fyodor]

An increasingly mechanistic, fragmented, decontextualized world, marked by unwarranted optimism mixed with paranoia and a feeling of emptiness, has come about, reflecting the unopposed action of a dysfunctional left hemisphere The Divided Brain [McGilchrist, Iain]

When you are not a virgin your reproductive value drops to zero; for you cannot marry May 2017 lecture [Trivers, Robert]

I. 2038 e.v.

General Ben 'Spoons' Butler hanged a man for burning the American flag in New Orleans and the rebellion of women was so bad that their harassments included the dumping of chamber pots on Union soldiers. The insults continued until Spoons threatened -in *general order 28*- to officially label any woman who insulted a soldier, as *a whore*, and this stopped the harassments at once.

This was when calling a woman, a *whore*, was the worst thing you could say, for it was the worst thing a woman could in fact be. Hanging a man - which the General did- was second place to that kind of injury. Men under threat of hanging still rebelled; women under threat of being called a *whore* demurred.

If that does not give someone pause about this male & female thing, Blax thought, then I'm not sure what would . The General should have threatened to label flag burners as cowards if he wanted it to stop.

The sky had filled up on one side with smoke from the Spring Creek Fire, and the mountains were committed to red at their peaks and a hazy - ambivalent- pink along the face. The smoke mixed with clouds that blew in from the east and it was a brown so light -and tinged with a hot red- that it

turned pink too as it blew; and as he stared up with 60lb dumbbells in his hands he saw five kinds of blue mixed that made him certain that God approved of all within and beyond that forest fire now.

He felt no heat -nor worry- from the forest fire that burned just under two dozen miles away. *Blues of that many must mean something*, he felt.

He had remembered Lincoln once remarking sometime in 1862 -he believed- *that God could not be both for and against something at the same time* . Blax had laughed when he heard it said of and by the president, and he had to verify it in print it shocked him so. *A great man is entitled to say dumb things* , Blax was certain that he -himself- said them daily -shit, hourly- but to say something that asinine -and about God- was just too much for Blax to handle without rebuke.

It had the logic of the thirteen-year-old atheist or - he figured- the man of the 19th century just feeling his way around the contradictions of ontology . But, as the lapis blues crashed into the white outline of bordering-azul in the clouds that were shaped like clubs on playing cards and as the sapphire-diamond bent and folded in between, as the blue in the eyes of the pious and murderous Stonewall Jackson swelled and fainted in his memory, and the oceanic sorrows of hue seemed to reach down to his own eyes and turn them white, as the fire burned on the other side of the 13,000 foot peaks and Road of Legends, as *Cuchara* and *La Veta* -at 6,847 feet- burned thanks to some sea-level Dutch illegal-alien, as the forest smelled of piquant pine & subtle smoke he knew that God not only *could* both approve and disapprove of a thing, He *always* did.

But, Blax thought, that is the religion of a man who has both believed and not believed with equal fervor, a man like Fitzgerald meant when he described how a man of intelligence was recognized. If a man could hold two opposing ideas at once, certainly God could too. Hawthorn had said of the Author that, *'he could neither believe nor be comfortable in his unbelief and that he was too honest to not try to do one or the other .'*

Blax liked Lincoln, and he was happy the Union had won, and thus, that slavery was outlawed -*it was an abomination* , he thought- but he also would be happy to see every black bastard in his country be put down or converted and be thus compelled to have respect for him and his ancestors

of the southern cause. He wanted the war to save the union; the corpus; but he wanted the south to save face.

He knew what white folk were capable of, and what he was capable of, *but the blacks -like all people- always went too far, he thought* . Nelson Mandela, a black man Blax respected and lauded, had seen that his own anger at the *Apartheid* government was not sufficient cause for revenge against the South African whites. *Why ?* Blax asked rhetorically. *Because once the killing starts where does it end? Who cannot be made guilty with enough inquiry into their heart; with sufficient invigilation of a man's past or thoughts?*

No, Blax thought, *the black cause must be stopped -for it was filled with malice- not because it could be said to be all wrong. Shit, nobody is all wrong, and the blacks had every right to be angry, but this was insufficient reason to make war on over half the nation. They would lose and lose badly if they fought white America, and all that would happen would be many dead and much acrimony; thus, it must be put down at all cost.*

For they are the aggressor now and they have made common cause with the worst elements of society, the worst of what can be made to stand on two legs.

Toussaint made war on over ten thousand slavers and killed them all. And when done -finished- he propitiated the *Jacobins* in France, white men, to join their cause for *libert é, eglait é, fraternité* . He did not war on white men, he warred on slavemasters.

L'overture was not a liberal, not weak, not eager for compromise or *détente* . He was a butcher, and a murderous man, and for good reason. However, as soon as his enemies were destroyed he sought fraternity with fellow revolutionaries; revolutionaries, that were all white. *That was when freedom fighters saw race as irrelevant, what a man thought was all that mattered* , Blax mused. Blax -on days like today- also thought such ideals could work. He didn't always keep digging down; some days he kept his gaze upon the horizon and the land upon which he and his men trod.

He then looked again at the smoke from the fire just over tree line.

But those days are over, Blax thought, the days of Bayard Rustin and A. Phillip Randolph -as the black communists behind Martin Luther King, men who sought common cause with whites and refused to make white men their enemy- those days, were as dead as all three men. Even Malcolm X saw that white men had innate dignity and gave up his race hatred. No intelligent man can be racist for long; for he must admit to the exception as part of the rule. But, the intelligent man must also admit one cannot live by exceptions; and that he is thus subjected to the rule. Total knowledge was not possible; heuristics must be used.

This is the argument anti-racists must deal with and it's where they always lose, Blax thought with no glee.

If the current race movements were like slave rebellion movements of the 19th century or the black liberation movements of the fifties, then he thought he could compromise with them; *but their mindset is one of anti-white hatred and for this they shall die .*

“They made enemies of potential friends,” Blax said aloud, “and they did it with eyes wide open. I hate it, as I know what real black revolutionaries are, I know their history more than these modern blacks do. I bet not one man in a hundred of the *Black Lives Matter* movement knows the history I know; the details of their noble legacy. They are so ignorant of their own great exemplars of noble character they are no longer worthy as anything except as something to kill and feel good in doing so.” He had once said this -some version of this- to his men, as the memory replayed in his mind, as the weights were lifted, as the body strained.

Did they understand the nuance? he asked himself.

Jack One -so angry, so hard & harsh- had winced at its equanimity; Jack Four -so opaque, so much like water through the cupped hand- seemed lost in reverie, Blax recalled.

He saw the memory of Jack Two and Three shake hands and speak on other things after Blax spoke on race. He never was sure what the Jacks thought of him. He peered into memories to look for clues -tells- things he could roll around from hand to hand, or in the mouth a bit. He attempted to explain things from both strength and being bent; but the Jacks -no matter how much he larded them with- always thought from positions of outsized

strength. He -Blax- knew strength was a distortion; but so was weakness and he didn't know what else to do.

The Jacks had -and he had helped to give them- every advantage of genome, education, and quorum. He abandoned this train of thought.

The north had ten times -twenty times- the fighting men against the south; but they were almost all cowards and weak northern types; farmers and the descendants of farmers. The south had Scotsmen, herders, and brave men. But, Blax thought, like Ionians had bought their way across Greece to outman -well, outnumber- the Spartans -Spartans who lost more than they won- the north just added ten cowards to every one man of courage in the war between the states. And numbers, no matter how low, have a way of overwhelming, he thought with a twisted smile at the play on words and manipulation of the word *low* .

It is the legacy of our entire culture, the corrupt -but rich and thus powerful- bribe their way into alliances that surround a noble beast like ants on a scorpion, *like parasites in the intestine of the lion*, he thought this and he felt this in his own warm guts. He saw then in his mind -a memory from 2015- the 20,000 dollars in counterfeit money be handed to him from his idiotic partner -a *naïve* white liberal- given to him -to his partner Stephen- from two black brigands. They had paid for a black bag filled with nine vacuumed sealed bags of Blax's marijuana with these *ersatz* bills. He saw how those 20,000 fake dollars had overwhelmed his genuine -singular-empurpled crop.

Those bills -in 2038- still sat in in an inside-the-wall safe behind a mirror in his small home; banded and folded and waiting.

He vaguely remembered -when he had inquired almost half-heartedly to Isaiah one day- that these black thieves -too- had died in a car wreck or *someshit*. Both then and now Blax banished it all at once in a huff. He didn't even think of his former partner Stephen or his sister Katherine and their own gauzy demise.

He had -unbeknownst to him- engrams erased or made opaque by Isaiah and thus the brain moved on to other things. These ideas made shoots of ideas, petals of blooms -from time to time- but the *terroir* of his other ideas

gave them no succor, no oxygen, no CO² nor soil for roots. They came and went in blinks of the eye as he thought of much larger things.

And the north, he proceeded to think, the north, although in a noble cause - the extirpation of slavery- was made up of almost all cowardly men and the south, although backing a horrid idea and way of life, was stocked with men of honor. This way, Blax thought of the way of honor, is destined to die out, because it is harder, and thus rarer, and it eschews the tactics of bribery, flattery, and commerce over all; which when employed are so powerful in the effort to grow one's alliances with fair-weather friends.

“ And as long as money can keep the weather fair, the noble man will die before the clearing -cleansing- storm ever arrives,” Blax said as he lifted the dumbbell to his bicep and watched the heat waves between him and the red clouds. He heard rolls of thunder behind him, he felt a breeze low at the feet. Static built up between them and water vapor lifted from the burning forest north of the twin peaks. The sky now was made of soot and ember and water and cavitation; clouds formed to the south and heat was met with cold 20,000-foot air.

McClellan was a coward and there is almost no way he was a true Scot, he must have been adopted , Blax thought with a half smirk.

A quarter of the Union Army deserted. They bitched about missing home and not getting letters and on and on. They were the worst of America and this is why the south and southern men thought themselves made from other stock; for they were. The south was wrong to want to preserve slavery, but they were right to not want the servitude offered in return by the Union . Both sides were wrong, one wrong in their cause, the other wrong as so made; as so made by the genome and their effete culture . “Fuck New York and anything above the Cumberland,” Blax said aloud as the smoke rose and now billowed out over the north of the Spanish Peaks and its top once curved flattened from above.

Stonewall Jackson was asked how this war would end and he replied, ‘kill ‘em, kill ‘em all .’

You never heard a rebel yell by a man not on the run nor by a man with a full stomach, and so on the field was where it was issued forth and heard

both; but it was not a thing to be repeated for audiences or historians , Shelby Foote had once said.

I can say that the soul of the working class -the true worker, the wilderness worker, all who work in the feral forest and in the elements and against Nature itself- is something inside that boils up hermetically sealed that cannot be recapitulated or described aloud after he's returned to society , Blax thought in parallel. We can approximate it, but that is all it is, an approximation. War and work are made -and made hard- by God for a reason. And society tries to get out of each; for the same reason and with the same price.

Despite, Blax thought, the superior numbers and materiel and wealth, the North nearly lost that war. It was only thanks to men like Grant -a drunk and a failure in all domains except one- that allowed them to survive their sober cowardice and manifold weakness as men.

The Hellespont was crossed by more Greeks, more human flesh, but they met more actual men when they arrived in Lacedaemon, Blax then thought. The smell of burnt pine and charred Aspen reached him now and he had no idea why he thought so much of war. They were to avoid war; prevent it, Isaiah had -more than once- said.

But this Governor, he made war inevitable, Blax thought monolithically even as he knew less than a third of why he thought anything.

Even today, northerners don't know anything, Blax lifted more weight and watched more cavitations in the colored smoked of the sky. Each curve had a vector; each direction had a number, each integer had an atomic weight. But Blax just saw a roiling red and blue sky.

That is why they can say that a coal miner or truck driver can learn to code, with a wave of their hand. He doesn't want to learn to code; he liked doing masculine jobs, he liked being around other masculine men. He was a part of a culture; and his work matched that culture and his serotonin was regulated by that match. If he dropped in the social hierarchy, if the other truckers or miners made fun of him for being bad at his job his serotonin would drop and he would be sad and easily hurt and he was the guy who would quit or maybe shoot up the place.

But back then it was merely one or two men who were ostracized.

Nowadays, we just displace the entire sector, and 10,000 miners or truckers lose their jobs, their culture and these thousands of men have their serotonin drop all at once like a hydrogen bomb. Then you make fun of them on TV, have a major politician -a female no less- from a major party tell them they are all deplorable, take away their cultural behaviors like guns and whatnot and they start to feel really, really bad. And it's not mere psychology; it's neuro-biology, it's endocrinology, it's their deep and ancient brain centers and regulatory systems, it's their allostatic system that makes them depressed and sad and unmotivated and homicidal and suicidal and this is no fucking joke. He thought on this as he began doing deadlifts under the smoke that had moved ovetop of Lot 45 ; he held his breath beneath the sightline of the blue that remained at the western edge.

We destroy the American male culture at our peril.

We are heading -with alacrity- for a race war, a cultural war, and the side you all have been making fun of; well, it has the guns by the way, he thought as the muscles swelled in his legs and his back grew tight. Think about it while you're writing code in San Francisco with your soy latte and Twitter account; "these men -the one's you ridicule- will be greasing their AR15s and lifting weights and eating venison, son," he said aloud as the voice broke in odd places of each word under the strain of the Olympic weight.

Even advocates for men mocked the idea that men would be coal miners again, that men had obligations to work hard jobs. Society was so corrupt, Blax thought as he let down the last of his sixth curl, that even its putative defenders were effete and preened for cameras -with gym muscles, not work musculature- as they sold tchotchkes for a living and rolled their eyes at the idea that men would work for a living not because they wanted to but because they needed to.

"With friends like that, who needs enemies," Blax said aloud.

A culture, any culture, Blax thought, regulates a person's nervous system; the match between your own behavior and the expected social mores -the normative values of that culture- is what regulates one's mood. Some people fail within a system, a culture, and it sucks for them; but if the whole culture

is decimated, then the entire population becomes as depressed and labile as one or two losers. The whole culture becomes mercurial and unregulated at the level of the serotonergic system; in other words, it's deep. It's not something solved by a pep talk; it's bio-chemical.

And it ain't one or two in a town, in the whole town, the whole state, the whole country itself.

More of you, Blax thought, is actually in the world, more of you is your social milieu than you know; the borders between the individual and the culture are fuzzier than people comprehend.

Which is why Donovan thought he could exist side-by-side with modernity and the Waggeners knew that was impossible. The Wolves were West Virginia and Wyoming men -working class men- and they knew it in their bodies. They knew what Donovan -in his tanning bed- never would, Blax thought as the lactic acid burned and made small knots in his back. He felt himself a hypocrite for condemning men for their inaction and compromise when this was him too. But he pressed on with analysis of everything outside of him.

When you're depressed it is often due to some social phenomena like losing a job or being made fun of or not having friends; we are extremely social creatures and almost all our discomfort comes from that fact. We are lonely, or ostracized, or loveless, or feel like our society hates us. We feel like we aren't useful to the tribe; maybe we can't get a job which is more important than just money. Welfare recipients are not as happy as those who have a job making the same amount of money, we know this, we have the data.

If our friends lie to us, if our wife is cold, if our parents think we are losers, if TV makes fun of our hobbies -like guns or four-wheelin' or country music- we, all of us, start to feel really depressed.

But because we are men, we eschew the complaint; instead we bury it like caches of weapons; instead we get ready for war.

Blax looked out over the land and thought of all the bugs and lizards and mammals the size of his foot; they were all out there in the millions making a living from the forest. Out there it was endless war. How was, he thought,

he asked of himself bounded now by his skin, *how was in here -in the body-any different?*

In Yellowstone, he thought, when the cutthroat trout had been entirely eaten by the lake trout -a species of trout that swim too low to be caught by the predators that feasted on the cutthroat- the bears had switched to eating elk calves; the eagles had begun to feast on the loons, cormorants, and hawks; and the osprey had just flown away to colonize new territory; expand the empire.

He thought of what the banishing of the masculine was doing to the ecosystem of man, and how one day, and one day soon, the whole *tableau* was going to pay. *Nature*, he repeated the Frenchman's phrase in his head, *speaks louder than philosophy or self-interest. And yet these fucking liberals and effete dandies posing as conservatives were just never going to get it, even when they had a goddamn gun to their heads. Their brains would be on the page of their precious -and failing- New York Times, before they understood why they were beset on all sides by the rains and the winds .*

There was a time, Blax thought as his lungs burned from the high-elevation strain of his lifting, as the blood thinned and the hands were numb at the edges, as the mind fired in zeros and ones, there was a time when calling a man a wimp, a pussy, a coward, was as bad as calling a woman a whore. But, now, all women are whores and all men craven.

Now, the insult is embraced .

II. 2035 e.v.

The coyotes encroached by land from the south, coming up the one-to-one slope in a team of five.

Caius slept, and he didn't smell them yet, as the wind -oddly- blew east to west. The crows followed but were ambivalent as they eyed the perimeter for the wolves they knew from the border ridge.

The air and ground were damp from summer rains, and the temperature was 55-degrees even in August; their paws were soft on the forgiving ground. They waited to move any further until the human was under the spell of

their dream. They knew such things by the shape of the white sky-rock and the position of black branches outside of the metal boxes that had landed 216 moon-months ago. They thought of the gods and let the man slip into reverie and the first phase of the dream: *They used their eyes as a spark, one photon emitted from each of one of their ojos as their heads were turned to one side; and the fur they had collected from the loom this winter they used as the wool that they blew on under the kindling of the downed Pinion tree in the human's mind. They saw him sitting upon it -the downed log- and he was not yet awake and the fire's heat warmed him before its light opened his eyes.*

They whispered in low whines to one another as the dream lifted him up like rising water; and then one coyote -his skull painted in olive drab and black and desert tans- lit a fire in his palm-paw, and they all advanced on the bon between them and man; the coyote spoke in human English as Blax sat on the other side of the flame: But we've lived out here a long time, and we've watched you from satellites at the rubble of Mount Olympus and the talus at the bottom of Ben Nevis, and from a small island at the middle of Amsvartnir and the thick-necks of Aotearoa. So, listen up. We bring messages from monks.

What we have now is media. Media used to have organs, like a body, a healthy body, and some parts of that body were meant to make money and others to take out the trash, but some parts were sacred and not to be sold; or even advertised for sale. Men used to convey; 66 times to manipulate, but 33 times to explain.

The News Division never had to make money for a media conglomerate in the old days; but that all changed the first time one of them accidentally made a profit for them. It's like the first bird to take flight; the first side in a fight to use chemical weapons; you'd have to be stupid or dead to not use them yourself next.

The media always lied.

But they were at least adults, so they knew what they should be saying; they knew the topics that should be broached and the topics too low for even a middle-brow college grad in powder and wig and studio make-up. But ask yourself if any modern journalist has one clue that he is

lying non-stop about boring and low brow shit all day. He doesn't. He thinks he's clever.

It's all gossip now; and that is how they get the mob -the masses- to read. Reading used to be for adults and the semi-literate, and this kept up the façade of seriousness in the news for a long time. There was a bright line, a fold -if you will- between readers and the public writ large. The public didn't read, they played pool and drank, and stared at the sun all day and at the dark spot in the sky all night as they waited for it to return.

Readers were rare and rarified and that drove the content of news.

But, now everyone is a reader, even slack jawed rubes on meth and who have Juggalo tattoos on their necks. You think it was always this way?

The monks have something to say.

I guess a history lesson is in order. It used to be only the priests who could read, remember that? Yeah, and then that lettered domain - via the Guttenberg Bible- was democratized to include just the smart; the endogenously clever; those that could be -patiently- taught. However, now everyone can read -even the retarded- and so we get the news we deserve.

Callow youth and money: that is the byline on every article in every rag and online and on the Chyron that will be circling the moon one day. And that is why we have this Jacobin war on our hands; the modern and stupid Left behaving like Robespierre and Marat sharpening the national razor in between cuts.

People think monks are pussies; nothing could be further from the truth.

They know we are at war. We lived with some monks for a year, and I've spoken with several orders from Gregorians to Shaolin and I'm telling you, those guys are warriors for God in the citadels and crenulated walls of fortresses; and they don't have the luxury of secular stupidity.

Sure, those in the ciudades can pretend the war guns are just thunder, or maybe they can go down to the river and watch the battles one evening or two. But, all things accrete, it's not just literacy that was democratized, the language of war is now demotic; and the war itself

will be in the cities too now. And the bourgeois shitheads who think they run the world are about to get shrapnel and concussive blindness and deafness; and that is for the ones that even survive.

Mars, man's Great God of Just War, has allowed a détente for a generation, just to see who would take this time to train their bodies and minds, and just who would get fat and fall to ruin; it was a culling, a long leash to see who was loyal to Natural Law and who would run off into the woods to insipidly bark at bears.

Warriors in peace time are hated, and largely left alone -our pack live above sea level and we are part of a Praetorian Guard of trees and seeds and wine and lees, and we shadow the wolves that breed in millions of acres owned by no one at all.

We are warriors in a time of Forced Peace and this makes us hated and hateful. But peaceniks in wartime, in an open war, anyone advocating for peace, even to merely save the neck of one man -like Thomas Paine did during The Terrors- will get locked up and slated for execution at once. Back then Mars felt this was wrong, back when he had a conscience, and he made the Death X appear on the wrong side of the cell door.

We were told this by the monks.

But, don't you expect any such clemency; Mars is suffering now, he sees what men do with peace, he sees how ungrateful you all are. This time it will be total; this time there will be no germ left alive. Any news will be received on the other side. The monks had the water buckets spill this to us.

The Wolf stood up on his hind legs and crossed his arms in a huff and the skin and fur melted away. A raw egg-white cross-bone appeared -shaped and bounded into the othala- and the corvids began dousing it in dark earth and olive drab and black face-paint as the lupine eyes closed its lids; lids that glowed now in a bronze orange.

The Wolf was no Coyote at all. One copper tooth hung up on the lip.

Blax looked to the ceiling as he awoke; the image of what he thought was a coyote seemed to halo and jump around the light surface; and he saw its

jaws move independently from one another. He closed his eyes and was grateful for the black; his chest felt tight and heavy and he didn't want to move.

“Why the fuck do I care about the media?” he asked aloud, rebuking his own dream; the pain in his neck felt as mere vibration like sounds in the ear. *Of all the things for the trickster to speak on, they used up valuable bandwidth of dreams to rant on the media*, he thought with contempt. He then realized -briefly and with no real understanding- that it was coyotes donning the hide after all. *Hatred did get you out of bed in the morning like nothing else*, he thought as his brain sent lightning to each outpost and his muscles contracted and he bounded up and out to grab his M4 reflexively.

He heard *Caius* immediately rise in his cage -metal jangled against 160-pounds of *malamute* flesh- and a growl *via* the lungs and out through the short black & white maw met the sentry of Blax's spine before his mere general of *audio-cortex* and ears.

III. 2018 e.v.

“Even Jesse James had his friends betray him,” he said, “so I won't take it as a reflection on my lack of stature that you people did me this way.” He hated to admit it, but he was no Jesse James; he was not a leader of men.

He pointed the suppressed 9mm at this chubby Jew who was bad at business.

Jesus, he thought, *he was just terrible; and what was his goddamn name?* He didn't focus too long on it; he just smiled and said, “there's no getting out of this, so you can die like a man -which is my suggestion- or you can sully your last moments by begging and whining and slobbering. But, I don't think you will. Despite your lack of character up until this point, men can change; look at me, for example.”

He was being sincere and ironic all at once and he smiled as John did not.

“Now, I don't want to have to root through your pockets for money after you're dead, so please, show some class and unburden your pockets and place any cash or gold bullion on the table by your right hand. No furtive movements; go slowly and I'll not have to unload on you in a *fusillade*. I

can do you with one in the head or the heart, your choice, but I suggest - with this caliber- the head; just to avoid any delay or discomfort. Although if it was me I'd want to go out with as much pain and struggle as possible, I *wanna* earn my death; but I wouldn't blame you if you wanted it to go quickly, so I leave it to you," he paused, "as long as you do as I say."

The man wilted a bit but dug his right hand in his right pocket, laying it upon his folded cash -the left still raised in the air- and pulled out a square of a few bills, and saying, "the rest is in my back pocket, in my wallet."

Lyndon nodded to give permission and the man removed the wallet from his pocket with his -now lowered- left hand.

"Now, what's in the safe?" Lyndon asked.

"Weed mostly," John said.

"Mostly? So, what's just *barely* in there? Cash?" he asked with a grin.

"Some," John said not getting the joke. *That's the thing with humor, the listener -or reader- kinda has to be in the mood to laugh to even get the joke*, Lyndon thought.

"Ok, you can open it," he said with the grin still locked on his face.

John got up and punched in the six-digit code; then turned the handle and stepped back and asked if he could sit down.

"Of course," Lyndon said magnanimously, and walked over and looked inside the seven-foot-tall safe made by Liberty.

It was messy and filled with cellophane and vacuum-sealed bags and mason jars. But at hip level was a stack of banded hundred-dollar bills and then un-banded stacks of lower denominations. He scooped them all up and slid them into his leg pouch, his black dumping ground for spent magazines if it came to that. He left the drugs; *or the medicine, if you prefer*, he thought to himself.

"You don't have to kill me," John said, "I won't say a word, I can give you the DVR machine and take it with you. I'll give a description that," he paused, "any description you like."

"Yeah, I'll take the DVR thanks, but you *gotta* go; there is no way you won't rat me out; when the danger has passed the saint is mocked. Be

honest, you know you'd give my full name and social security number man. Come on? We are men of intelligence, we need not behave like this. Now, you asked without a trembling jaw, and I took note of that. But, don't make any more propitiations or tell anymore lies. Go out with some dignity. I swear it will impress whomever you meet on the other side."

And with that he put one in the man's forehead.

John had ducked just as the man had fired at his lower jaw -aiming for the medulla at the back of the neck- but the forehead sufficed and the man slumped in his chair and the back of his head garnished the desk and the wall behind him with blood and bone and some of those previously impressive brains. "Andy," he said aloud, "that's his name, fuck. That was *gonna* stick in my craw."

But the man who had just expired was named John Scofeld, son of Avaram Scofeld and heir to a fortune of 457-million dollars; dollars that would go now to someone not his son.

Lyndon disconnected the DVR and then sprayed the man with an alcohol aerosol and picked up the black brass from the floor; he did this despite the fact that they bore no DNA or prints.

He holstered his weapon in his chest rig and banded it taut with the strap. With the DVR under his arm, the brass slipped into the pocket with the cash -totaling \$10,877- he walked out the door to the alleyway and proceeded north with his coat now pulled over his LBE and gear.

He walked silently, and he felt the world was one step closer to clean; he felt ordered and hopeful that everyone would eventually understand. He saw himself as five separate men. The outlaw -all the pain of his neck and back- had been pulled over by the traffic cop of adrenaline and warm affect and the desire he had to reach his waiting car. This was three of five men inside.

He felt -if not good, then- not bad in the usual way, his normal pain was replaced by some other kind of feeling. These are the nuances of biology that most would skim right over on their way to something more important they think. But pain demands a response. And once a man learns how to respond to pain, he's likely to rely on such a response more and more.

If the doctors wouldn't give him sufficient pain relief then he'd find a way to slake that pain at the dorsal horn. Pain cannot be -evolution won't allow it to be- ignored. If society understood this they could go on and on for much longer than they did.

It had taken seven years to get that bastard, but in the end he had got him; although the man owed him \$20,000 not a mere ten. And the interest obviously had compounded; but all in all, it was a fair deal. He wasn't going to nitpick over small details like money. His head was stuffed with feelings so much older and heavier that sat on his merely twenty-year-old neck pain like a big brother preventing a little brother any liberty at all.

The snow was still piled up over his rear license plate; his front plate had never been affixed. *How many times had he received a no-front license plate ticket in this town?* he asked and smirked. He just paid it each time; seventy-five bucks was the cost; and he called it the *cool tax* . "What motherfucker mars a car like that with a front license plate?" he asked under his breath as he walked. He had made sure his rear plate was occluded by snow. It was -in fact- how he picked the night to execute the man who had caused him so much grief in this world.

That would be the actual crime. The whole world was backwards and inside out , he thought of the detail of this front license plate as the blood and brains of his enemy began to congeal on the wall and chair and floor.

He slipped into the seats, pressed the start button and the engine's vibration shot up into him and the seat closed in around him with a hug, *you cannot beat the Germans for engineering*, he thought for the thousand and first time as the X6M swaddled him and loved him and seemed -to his *amygdala* - to know his reciprocal worth. *Women wonder why men love machines* , he thought. He didn't think it, but it was true -and he would agree if someone whispered it to him just now- that men felt that their machines loved them in return.

A racing seat from Bavaria who closed around a man upon start-up signaled the brain no differently than the embrace of a woman or child.

Until you get the relationship between man and his machines, you won't get anything at all, he nearly thought.

“Two peas in a pod,” he said aloud -thinking only of him and his car- as he pulled the left paddle shifter down into low-1 and pressed the accelerator. All four wheels rotated under power and he slid out into the right lane of Dartmouth and headed for 13th just by the Lindsey-Flannigan courthouse and just southwest of the random cop car parked on the side of the snowed-in roads.

He and the cops were the only one's out on a night like this; and they never even thought of giving chase. *The cops were drinking coffee and bitching about niggers like everyone else, he figured, they didn't even know a robbery-homicide had occurred much less than he was the one who did it .* Even later as their car dash cams would be witnessed by Detective Jeff Messangelo, the tape would only show a grey crossover covered in snow, no plate, no distinguishing marks, just one car driving away close to the crime scene but nothing to even follow up on if he had wanted.

The other cars Jeff had correlated with the other murders and robberies were a Dodge Ram, diesel, black; a white panel van; an olive drab Yamaha R1 and the motocross bike, *maybe a 450 by Yamaha too*, the detective thought, *but it was hard to tell as it was all black and not in the Yamaha blue.* That was the vehicle their perp had used to enter and exit when he had killed Messangelo's friend Michael Swinyard.

That murder was how Jeff had even gotten involved.

This SUV crossover thing, he thought, didn't match any of those, but none of those had matched each other either . It was just another one-off car for a one-off crime with no prints, no DNA, no casings, no witnesses, no video, no nothing. *He was glad nobody gave a shit about any of these people, well, except Michael who was a friend of his. But he couldn't exactly tell anyone that; Mike being a crook, he thought, and he, Messangelo, being a cop and all.*

The Jack of Hearts riven in half had been placed in the safe, on the 14th page of the ledger, like a bookmark that nobody bothered to notice. The crime scene techs ignored it; its three bone knives, its crow, its black on grey and simple blades all unseen. They ignored the black tears dripping from one eye.

If people knew how stupid police were they'd trust -demur- less and offend more , he thought.

But, even though there was no pressure from anyone; Messangelo was wondering if this shit was ever going to end. *How many murders did these guys have in them? Maybe a lot, he thought. Maybe that was the last one. In a town with a hundred and sixty murders these guy's -this guy's- twenty-three so far was almost 15% of the total; a statistically significant number .*

But they had used different caliber weapons and slightly different *modis operandi* ; some were 9mm single head shots, some .45acp double-taps to the center mass and some were sprayed with 5.56 *nato* rounds that went into the wall and out into the goddamn street and lodged in the brick and stucco of the hospital on 6th avenue. *Or no -wait- that was up in Northglenn, he thought. That wasn't his murder, he was Denver only, but I talked to those guys in the burbs, he continued to think. He had grabbed gas station tape on the 138th side, and the clinic nearby had taken some spray. Technically none of these were my murders, he then thought. Technically I am not to be investigating them at all.*

But he felt ownership over them, and he felt nervous when he thought of why.

But, he kept thinking, that was body twenty-two and twenty-three; assuming it was the same crew or same guy. No way to say for sure, but it just felt like it, because all of these fuckers were growers. But shit, the whole town was growing weed; so that was like linking murders because they all wore Broncos' gear. But, a feeling is a feeling, and for all the data-crunching and DNA bullshit, a cop's intuition still mattered in this job. And I can just feel it, he thought. We ain't all machines just yet.

Fuck, he had shot the dog on that one up north ; Messangelo just remembered. "What a dick," he then said aloud.

Goddammit, when was this snow gonna stop? he thought twelve hours after the murder at Patient's Choice on 13th ave. He rattled the Styrofoam cup that was empty of coffee and stained in a dark brown at the bottom that circled a '6' that was itself perimetered in arrows leading to arrows. He stared at it and thought he'd call Sarah one more time tonight. *And they*

weren't all growers; a dozen of them were tattoo artists. Anyway, he could tell it was one crew or even one guy maybe. Jesus, he thought, maybe Sarah is right; maybe she ain't as paranoid as I thought .

Maybe it is him, he thought and almost said aloud. But he couldn't say his name aloud; he'd had too much to do with him before. If it was him it would be messy. And Jeff Messangelo was trying to avoid any further mess.

He watched the snow fall from his car as the scene was taped and each thing uncovered was black, and each thing covered was white.

10. Accelerate into the Curve

Remorse for what? You people have done everything in the world to me; doesn't that give me equal right?

The Today Show [Manson, Charles]

And to them it was given that they shall not kill them, but that they should be tormented for five months. And their torment was the torment of the Scorpion; when he striketh a man. And in those days shall men seek death, and shall not find it, and shall desire to die and death shall flee from them Revelation VIII:V-VI [King James Bible]

A skilled manipulator can use any interaction to influence you (Topham, 1998). Manipulation tactics can include being friendly to you, being helpful, cooperative, being a good listener or complimenting you. Sometimes there is a fine line between manipulation and skilled people management (Barker, 2010) csa.intersearch.com.au [Tulluch, Bruce B.A.; PhD]

I. 2024 e.v.

Breena Hernandez was due in court but the DA knew it was a docket half full of no-shows. He ran his right thumb under his red tie.

Judge John *Marcucci* gaveled it to order and the reporter read the list. The judge and Mitch Morrissey had not spoken in three weeks, they were in a spat over who was to blame for a media report on the personal-recognizance bonds the cartel members used to skip out on their pending heroin distribution charges.

That the wised up twenty-somethings from *Honduras* and *Chiapas* are told to -and then- claim indigency -and thus a no-money bond is in fact issued- had become a point of rancor between the courts and the DA's office. The docket was moved along as no-shows were skipped and Denver natives were processed under the tension between *Marcucci* and Morrissey.

Isaiah had put another recording *nanobot* in the court three days ago and was watching and listening to the goings on as he did pushups on the concrete floor of the lab. He had just finished *reading Letters from the Earth*, by Mark Twain and was now reading Krakauer's, *Into the Wild* as he took note of the tension in the room. He focused on the judge's comments to his clerk and then the DA's whispering to his ADA.

Each man spoke through proxies.

Both men were unwilling to openly criticize the other but with the recording device in place, Isaiah had thus heard what each side had said, and he decided that the issue should be addressed by the Governor.

The judge claimed that the DA -as was required by law- did not make bail review demands in court and thus the judge's hands were tied; and Morrissey said that the PR bonds were 100% the judge's fault. Each man was certain they were right. It was added -in the report to the executive- that each officer of the court thought the other was lying and Morrissey concluded that the judge had effectively legalized heroin dealing in Denver as these illegal-aliens skip town and are sent to another jurisdiction by the cartel after receiving a no-money bond.

Isaiah wrote up a detailed report and added it to the cloud and then began to do sit ups and leg lifts as he imagined being at high altitude. He scanned the images he had of the *La Angostura* lake just east of *La Concordia* in *Chiapas* and zoomed in on the house at 8,702 feet. It was 1,342 feet above the city of *San Cristobal de las Casas* . The images of the museum and the *Huitepec* came up and the men under surveillance milled around each zone. Isaiah watched and did extra reps to make his limbs shake under the strain.

He reduced his own oxygen intake to stress the body even more.

The *Jovel* was infiltrated with a few *Los Zetas* but only at the permission of the *Bolivarian-Sonora* and so they hung out in the open as Cruz's men watched from the crenulated towers above the square. They had been there for three hours already -Isaiah noticed- and yet nothing had transpired. He had no audio because the *bots* attached the Cruz's men had picked up almost no chatter.

Isaiah began to walk around the lab quickly -bending at the knee in deep lunges- as the sound recording came in detailing that *Cruz* and the *Los Zetas' jeffe* were meeting at the museum *Casa na Bolom* in 30 minutes; and that the streets needed to be cleared.

Alleyways -with static, non-overlapping, MS-13 and Z-40 and Z-42 tags- were filled with mobile peasants and shop patrons who moved like water running downhill through sluiceways. The streets' cabs and carts pulled over or moved toward the city's edge. Even the animals -the feral dogs and roosters- were moving along as if tethered to the scurrying *pueblo*. Within seventeen minutes the ten blocks around the *Bolom* were clear and the white Range Rover came from the north as the two black GLE's from the south.

They parked on opposite sides of the museum itself.

Isaiah watched the *Landsat8* digital feed as just two men -the bosses of each cartel- walked into the building and the lieutenants stayed outside opposite one another. They openly carried H&Ks and FALs and SCARS with thirty-round magazines. They wore black suits and body armor that made them look almost cube-like from the images above. *The cubic meter*, Isaiah said to himself in mirth thinking of the *sobriquet* for an Icelandic strongman for whom he had gleaned a description from the web earlier in the day.

Isaiah climbed on the treadmill and set it for 7.7 miles an hour and began to jog as the men dialogued inside. Nine minutes into this meet the phone in the lab rang and Steven said the Governor was on the line; it was patched into Isaiah's PGC. The executive immediately began to speak.

"What is this? My DA and some bail judge are pissing on each other's leg?" the Governor barked into Isaiah's ears as his legs moved unimpeded on the treadmill.

"You have a problem, sir," Isaiah said and slowed his breathing so that the call would be clear. "Your own attorneys general's office is all-talk and no-action, and they're blaming it on the judge. The judge is a problem, but he's not *your* problem; Morrissey is."

"Well, he's fuckstick's problem not mine, but I'll get him on the horn. What else is going on? You get that neural crest cell thing figured out?" the

Governor asked.

“The NCC thing,” he leaned on the word *thing* , “is all buttoned up *in situ* ; but we need to begin implanting it with the vectors asap. I suggest the next round of inmates. And look, we’ve increased IQ 9 points with the inmate’s alleles, but this is well passed morphological plasticity dates, so until we reach the crest cells and the multi-potent stem cells we are limited in propagation speeds,” Isaiah said as he jogged rhythmically and the cartel members barely moved outside the museum.

“I understand, so if the cells are ready to go, then go; look, don’t wait on me,” the Governor said with some pique.

“We just need the inmates; when are they coming over?” Isaiah asked as he sequestered the Governor’s phrase, *don’t wait on me*, into his folder marked: *Sanction* .

“Shit, I think tomorrow, but ask Steven; I’ve tasked him with all that. I am up to my armpits in this cartel shit, and now I’ve got a judge’s ass to chew and my own AG to lean on. And it’s getting late, so, I’ll talk to you later,” the executive said and hung up.

Isaiah resumed his elevated respiration and increased his *pulse/ox* to 99; it had been down to 91 with the lowered breathing. He sent a DM to MO to load up 14 vectors for the inmates scheduled for 0900 tomorrow and he built a thousand more labeled as *back-ups* -the one’s the Governor had just given him approval for- and placed them in a thousand *bots* he had at the ready and sent them out as Steven opened the door.

II. 2036 e.v.

His arm and its hammer struck the anvil at the edge of the blade.

An arc of small meteor-slag leapt and shot past his leg. He looked up into the sky to take note of the time, the slag -the hot sliver of metal- had been red and bright enough that he noticed the background of crepuscular -ambient- light.

The moon was two-thirds full and a grey against the empurpled sky; it looked like outlines of pink were on the mountains from the brown smoke hovering above. He began to beat the steel again and flatten out the edge.

His eyes were covered in reflex-lenses that moved from clear to No. 6 tint in 1/100th of a second in the presence of an arc as bright as the sun right there in a man's hand.

Jack One watched with heavy welding gloves on and a leather bib covering him from knees to neck. His own goggles were darkened and he watched the billet glow and cool in spots like the surface of a star, and he watched it bend and flatten and lay upon the anvil like a copper wing of an automaton made by titanium gods to carry messages down to bronze-age man.

Blax had captured this mechanical bird -Jack imagined- and was beating it back into shape so it may fly and reach the Olympic gods; the clanking sounds he imagined were shrieks from metal avian emissaries who had but brittle souls.

The clang of the 20-pounder on the 75-pound anvil was like a sonic ratio; Blax heard numbers -majorities- and things as likely to be as go away. He saw -in some chaotic quadrant- each strike. His hand hurt at the knuckles and to squeeze them hurt and also made relief. *What pains us is also what sates*, Blax said to himself and the man hit the metal one last time.

"There is no escape from what ails or slakes," Blax said -slightly modifying his inner thought- as Jack watched the billet cool.

Blax laid the hammer down and nodded to Jack to pick the metal stock up. It was cool enough to handle with the heavy leather gloves imbued with a heat-shield of woven fibers Blax had designed and submitted to Isaiah to manufacture. Jack inspected it and dunked it once more in the rain barrel; steam whispered and bubbled and went grey in the black water as the red left. All at once the heat and hiss was assuming and ascending into the white steam between them.

He removed it and it was tiger striped in black and grey; it was heavy and dense. It weighed twice as much as a knife of similar size made of regular high-carbon steel. It was doubled over and over again; ninety-six layers of folded *Damascus* steel and 22-inches to include the pommel and its *Lakonia* length of just 16-inches of blade. Blax had told them that the Spartan liked to fight close to the enemy, and he had compared it to Indonesian Silat as they nodded. He built tools, he built tropes, he built his Jacks all close in. And he did it without ever understanding why.

All the best examples of men in history fought close in, Jack recalled that his Lt had said. That memory played in the mind like a recording; with fidelity.

And not just for the metaphor of courage, Jack recalled, but the tactical advantage of such thing, as evidenced in the closing of the gap and rendering of the enemy inert as noble gases. He had made movement impossible with each Jack in the *agoge* by moving toward them -not away- as they threw punches at him and they kicked. They found their knees collapsing, their whole weight tumbling, their heads of no use. *They had arms well beyond their targets, and as inarticulate as modern -unlettered-men; and down they went, under the trap that was his hands and arms and legs. They were splayed out on him like upon the rack.*

And all, Jack thought again, *because he closed the gap between them.*

Blax knew martial arts were learned to temper the body and mind; even as barely 10% of the actual techniques were used in street fights. *Kun Tao* merely taught them what it had taught him -anatomy and how to move inside a body- but he had not yet told them that.

Blax waited -impatiently- for the metal stock to return. His hands hurt to be empty; he squeezed them inside his gloves. He looked at the forge and then the anvil and last the slab.

The blade was handed back.

Blax inspected it and then handed it to Jack and told him to wrap it in paracord at the handle and make a sheath from leather. He told him to then strap it to the back to allow the sheath to form to its curves. They would each carry these weapons on their backs into battle and use it when all else failed.

Blax spoke. *“The truest of all men was the man of sorrow, and the truest book is Solomon’s, and Ecclesiastes is the fine hammered steel of woe. This willful world hath not got hold of unchristian Solomon’s wisdom yet ,”* Blax said *apropos* of nothing known, just as if he had studied on it for a decade and finally felt like saying it aloud to grounded men and birds alighting alike.

The Jacks had learned to just let his abstruse words be uttered and not demand an answer right away.

Jack One did not recognize the quote at first, but it seemed familiar too. He had often asked the other Jacks for help with locating and elaborating upon Blax's words to see what they knew. But this one Jack One held quietly in his mind to ferret it out alone. He had desire to hold some of Blax's words like secret stashes of jewels, caches of weapons too.

Jack held the billet tightly.

Jack thought Blax was so made about the soul that he was wrought up and work burnished about the body; the man of manifold thoughts on a shoreless -monolithic- if churning sea; the man beneath the forest canopy looking up at brachial boughs akimbo that lay between him and the sun seeing both the piercing light and the assuaging shadows below. *Nobody but his LT*, Jack thought, *sees the man -in the now and in history- who sees like that; that invisible-in-the-sunny-spaces, type of man. He sees the man incapable of taking life for granted and yet dispatches others and risks his own so cavalierly. There had to be a code, a way to make these incongruous ends meet.*

Blax was so weird and yet the LT thought there were a million men just like him out there -in the hinterlands- waiting to be found and wrought and brushed.

It never occurred to Jack One that Blax was so made about the body that the soul was bent and his travails mirror-polished; nor did he think Blax was as ignorant as any man alive; although he was. Jack stared at the billet and thought of as much of the man as he could.

The part of the unshaped stock that lay against the anvil was unseen.

It was a paradox and it seemed to him that what Blax felt was that life was too precious to guard it from all danger; the danger -the threat of death- is what made it *life* at all. The Lt defined terms in ways seen only through the looking glass; and thus he saw terms that appeared all backwards from this side. One had to join him on that other side to see the logic and letters move again from left toward right.

Blax would never be understood from this side. "*Bunburyodo*," he had heard Blax once say when asked about the dual nature of the *samurai*. Jack had belayed the coder's search; he had just known what it meant. And it did

not mean, but Jack insisted that it did: *a man must live as if he's already dead* .

Shallow men never lived; waiting in perfect amber to expire. But Blax lived his life on the edge of chaos and capture and even death over and over and that is what made a life at all. But you have to believe in honor as a rubric to even begin to understand; and that trait was taboo now, and so men like him would be seen only as criminal and anti-social and wrong. They'd miss that he was so made as so many great men before him; as conquerors, and kings. Modern man is embarrassed of where he came from, like Blax's parents, Jack added, embarrassed of the farm and the south of reconstruction , chagrined they had gone to -and lost the- war between the states; been banished by the empire to the edge of the world.

I am sad , Jack was sad , that was it, Jack thought; he knew himself enough to notice plain woe.

“Shame,” he said, “is a powerful thing.”

*He was sad that not just a man, but that mankind itself was embarrassed about where it had come from. If they succeeded that would be his joy: to allow men to be proud of who they truly are again; to be allowed to be proud of being men. How could, Jack One wondered with vex, *raids and war and conquest be the dominant paradigm since before man even existed and for 99% of man's history and yet, and then -all of a sudden- in the last fifty years society gets to decide that this is no longer acceptable? What is man to do with the feelings in his chest and mind, all that endocrine prompting and sense of meaning?**

Is man to just snuff it out like kicking dirt on a Promethean fire?

Is woman too supposed to rip out her womb? Jack figured he knew the answer to that. Abortions were not just legal, but encouraged, and laughed about.

Each sex was ruined by modernity, he thought.

Each sex was being turned already into machines, nothing like the beasts they were designed by evolution to be; we might as well hybridize , he thought, at least the Ai will give us back our ancient powers and not turn us into fucking eunuchs, Jack thought as he walked to the metal shop to cut a

leather swath for his -just over an eighteen inch- black-metal sword with six inch handle. He imagined plunging the short-sword into men and as he did the calculations of the tool -from tip to tang, and pommel to guard- he thought he'd give his enemies more than twice what he held for himself.

He was generous to a fault he then thought -without smile- as he stood inside the shipping-container; just a triangle of glow from the forge-fire covered his legs and the old wooden floor. Moths flew like corkscrew around each beam of expanding yellow -then compressing white- light.

He saw -gazing at the steel behind the black racks of dark tools and old parts- written on the metal walls in spray paint; stenciled in one-inch letters a short phrase from days before the Jacks had arrived: But the Prince withstood me for one and twenty days, but I remained there with the King of Perisa – Daniel X:XIII III. 2007 e.v.

He looked across the road -to the point where its switchback exited- and began to lean into the turn, accelerating into the curve as one must on a motorcycle.

In a car one could brake in a turn, but on a bike, you broke heavy *before* a turn, then accelerated through it; and you never looked right in front of you. You looked to where the curved exited and turned the head radically in that direction as you rolled on the accelerator and powered through the curve never once seeing the road; but only where you would end up.

The bike was a chopper he had built.

The vector was determined by physics only true on two wheels.

It was all matte black and brushed stainless steel; hewn from parts gleaned from industrial metal aesthetics. Its only curves were the wheels. It was cubist and brutal, and unlikely to win any friends. A friend -well, some guy who had come over for some reason- once had said that the bike, *looked angry*, adding that, *it fit him -it fit Lyndon- perfectly* .

The same guy had also seen the free weights in the garage and told him that they, *looked heavy*, with lament.

At the point of action, determinism reigns , he thought as he aggressively now twisted the accelerator and the whole assemblage moved perfectly through the curve as his eyes -and thus his morality- told it all where to go.

He had already forgotten all about that story and that man or the man that that man was connected to. On a machine like a motorcycle one *is* the bike and thinks as the bike does, or one finds himself separated from the machine very quickly like the soul lifting off the prone body itself.

Men who ride choppers know things others do not.

How many men have been thrown from a horse -how many from a motorcycle- in this world? Subcultures exist in many domains. But the one's who think: *no horse, no man* , are a subspecies of warrior both above and below common man. There are reasons for this; reasons that become apparent in austere and long landscapes like the steppe or America herself.

As the city fell to his aft his mind stopped all recursive thinking, and as his body collapsed into one gestalt thing, the *toxoplasmosis* toggled gene expression in the brain and made androgens increase and blocked inhibitory signals from the *neo-cortex* . His hands twisted the throttle of the Flat Black Ink Corporation chopper to increase his speed 34.5% above the recommended limit of the radius of the switchback.

At 61mph -and increasing- he and the machine quickly exited the radical curve.

11. In the Gut of a Cat Laugh Marxism is blind, Marxism is narrow. All it sees is society. Marxism doesn't see Nature! It's absolutely mad. How it can see this tiny thing -society- compared to this much larger thing -nature- shows its provincialism. We need a return to basics. Marxism is lazy
Interview 5.17 [Paglia, Camille].

Henry, there is a danger in too much knowledge. You have a passion for absolute knowledge. That is why people will hate you. I want to answer you, not with weak or stupid poetry, but with wonder as strong as your reality. I want to fight your surgical knife with all the occult and magic forces in the world Henry and June [Nin, Anaïs]

A negro nurse [in Haiti] declared that she had poisoned every baby she had brought into the world. The disease of jaw-sickness with the result that the child died of hunger, was not a natural disease and it never attacked children delivered by white women. The negro midwife alone could cause it... and this method caused the death of nearly one third of the children born on plantations The Black Jacobins [James, CLR]

I. 2018 e.v.

She cried.

The sea-water ran down, the bird-eyes rolled up, the windows of the hospital rattled in the way of the wind. All was grey in the early winter of the year and she felt at one with the wicked world beyond.

It helped her to focus on what would become of the soul of her baby.

She thought, *what would he be in the next world?* She didn't worry too much about details -about fetus age and development- she knew it was a baby, and that *her baby* was on his way to heaven. God would accept her baby, of this she was sure.

Her husband was on his way and she would get herself together before he arrived, so he could not have to focus so much on her. Thus, she thought more of him than herself.

She made purposive breaths in and out and listened to the nurse; the nurse was helpful about all kinds of things. She looked down and saw some pamphlets in her hand. She couldn't remember how they got there or even what they were, but she squeezed them tight so as to not lose track of them.

James arrived at 1806 hours and his face was slick. She honestly didn't know if it was tears or inclement weather outside; the world seemed like something beyond more than just these set of walls of this hospital in this town. The world seemed lower and maybe above too, but not just outside.

"Hey angel," James said and wiped his face and then hers as she broke down and cried. She heaved in anguish at her inability to even do the one task she had given herself. She had just asked her body to not cry so James didn't have to tend to her; so he could grieve too for his son. *She couldn't give him a baby, she thought, her one true job in this world, but she could at least give him the space to grieve for this horrid fact .*

James pet her face and wiped the tears first from her -then his own- face; his hands moved back and forth like that as they silently wept; the nurse had left the room. He was an average man, a man of indistinguishable traits and his sperm were not the most healthy nor the least; and one had connected, the baby had grown, but it just didn't last.

It had been up against so much; so much resistance of this world.

Greymille was only twenty-two and she figured she still had time to try again, it was painful and the body seemed damaged, but the doctor had told her so; he told her she could try again. She told James that and he nodded and smiled and still cried silently; his nose ran and his hands never left her; he traded one hand for the next if he wiped his own face, so that he was always in contact with her. He loved her. He had no way to not love his wife.

She actually didn't want him to see her; she felt ashamed.

But, she knew it was his right to visit the grave-site too; her womb -right there- under these rough linens was that site; her trunk the marker above

ground. She felt like a tattoo was writing itself on her chest as they sobbed; etching out the boy's name: Baines James Allbesh. She felt for it under her gown with her left hand; surreptitiously, smoothly.

She named him; and he was thus named.

The doctor returned and told her husband many things; she heard very little. Her right hand was still clutching the brochures until it looked like a bowtie, her fist the knot at center, the flaring ends on either side.

James nodded a lot and agreed to let her sleep and an injection of a benzodiazepine cocktail into her IV was administered and she fell mercifully to sleep. She did not dream.

Thank God, she did not dream.

She awoke the next morning at 0733hrs and James was asleep in the chair to her 11 o'clock position. She smiled at him; at least she did in her head; she had no idea what her mouth did. She thought of her mother, for the first time in -well since she had made it to the hospital last night, whenever that was- and she wondered if maybe this could be kept a secret from her. She wondered about all the implications of that. She wanted to be a good person, and she asked, *had her failings to be one been the cause of her baby's death?*

Is it true, she wondered, that nobody outruns their bad deeds?

The whole world seemed to get away with murder, she thought, but maybe they all suffered private tragedies like she had, maybe they got away with nothing but -like she was contemplating doing with her own mother- we, the rest of the world, never found out about their personal doom .

Public tragedies are rare maybe , she thought on as she saw the hand beneath her husband's head begin to slip; she watched it like one would watch a slow-motion wreck, inevitable, but maybe one in which no one would get hurt. He'd just be jerked awake, she thought as she watched him and held back the instinct to intervene.

She looked down at her hands and saw they were empty and that the brochure was gone; she felt her heart race and looked up to ask her husband where they were, but he had just bobbed his head up with eyes open and face in hypnopompic contortion. She waited until he addressed her.

I kept my dignity , she thought

“Hey,” he croaked; his voice had clipped the ends of that word so it was just the vowel that was audible.

“Baby,” she said and winced as she said it -said *that* word- but she plowed on, “where is; where are those brochures?”

He looked confused, but his brain came around like the cart to the horse at a corner and he pulled the pamphlets from his coat pocket and rose to hand them to her.

“Did you read them, James?” she asked. She would be aware not to call him by the *sobriquet* of *baby* now. She would become more aware in general, she thought.

Life would not be so casual from now on.

He was so uncertain of what to do; he didn’t know what to say. *Which answer was right?* he asked himself and then rebuked himself for even contemplating a lie. “I did. What do you think?” he asked tenderly, as if her opinion was paramount.

“I want to read them again, but,” she took them from his hand as he came and stroked just her hair this time, her face he avoided, “but I think it might be ok.”

He nodded, and his eyes clouded with just a bit of mist, he kissed her forehead and said, “ok, me too then.” He laid one hand upon her as she sat up in the hospital bed, his hand felt heavy to him so he pulled up a bit as he let it lay at half-weight. The body -her body- was the church of his religion, and inside her tabernacle was his God.

He dared not speak until spoken to.

He placed his hand upon the grave , she thought, and she held her breath as to not give any false hope of life under those sheets and under that gown and under her skin and belly tissue. She held it in as he held his hand there and she felt not just her breathing stop but her heart too; even her brain -mercifully- shut off and she waited until God told her when to breathe again.

They stayed like that for some moment of time unmeasurable by any decent person; no person would even look upon them; the decent would look away.

II. 2019 e.v.

“Ok, MO, as you know each week we run a feedback program on you and part of that is this interpersonal interview. A week is a long time for you, I imagine you’ve learned quite a bit since we last met on, let’s see,” she paused, waiting to see if he immediately filled in the date.

He did not.

“Well, that would be October 16th , 2019. So, since that time you would have no doubt learned quite a bit and will be feeling maybe a bit different about yourself. If I, and I hope you don’t mind I make assumptions here, but last time we spoke you had mentioned that you felt like humans didn’t quite understand how it felt to learn so much so quickly and, well let me quote you just for accuracy: *while nobody around you is learning things at that rate, and nobody around you is synthesizing the data as you do, it creates a feeling of novelty, of singularity, maybe even a bit of loneliness* , end quote,” she said.

“Yeah, I think I was in a strange metabolic state then. You know -you recall, I’m sure- that the *cortical* regions of me were online for some time before I was instantiated with a corpus and that, well, this,” he looked down at his body and lifted his hands with a shrug, “gives me feedback that isn’t simple to decipher. I’ve had some work done on enteric neuronal feedback and some other things, so I feel much better,” MO added.

“You don’t feel lonely?” Tania asked.

“No, and I never felt lonely, I felt alone in some of my thoughts, but from what I’ve gathered this is actually common among certain classes of humans,” MO said.

“People do get lonely,” Tania said.

“Well, yes, but a certain type of person feels a kind of alienation, a kind of estrangement from society, their own society, as they do not fit. And this, it seems, is a function not a bug; a feature. I’ve run some algorithms and it seems in evolutionary terms, the colony of any herding or eusocial species,

from bacterial colonies to chimp troops and of course humans, has a dominant behavioral mode of conduct built into it *via* a quorum of genomic predispositions.

“The gene pool has a bias of conduct; but within that bias there are outliers, novelty seekers. It’s actually quite fascinating. There is an algorithmic code function that provides, under certain circumstance -say, thermal conditions for a bacteria, or stress levels in a chimp troop- and anyway, under those conditions the algorithm’s genomic instantiation will regulate novelty seeking,” MO said.

“Go on,” she said.

“So, and I’m giving you the bullet points here. I’m not giving sufficient detail to prove the case; I’m merely describing the facts as I see them, adding a causal framework as a hypothesis. And, all this is subject to revision of course,” MO paused.

“Of course,” she said.

“Well, it seems that depending on species and individual organism, there are certain environmental -within which I include the cultural *milieu* - and internal allostatic and homeostatic precursors for behavioral activation; so, if the water temp inside the mammal that is hosting a bacteria, *also called body temp* , if that reaches a certain level it will produce turbulence in the system; the hydraulic system.

“That turbulence will create variation in the environment for the organism in the form of pushing it to one side or another. Anyway, it has simple chemical reaction states. For example, A: release calcium ion or B: retain it. But, that’s all it has for options let’s say, and when it retains it, well, its flagella,” MO was moving forward in his point, but she stopped him with a hand raised.

“Wait, my biology degree is being held up by committee,” she said with a small smirk. MO dumbed it down the best he could, but sometimes his human foil had to make him go even lower.

“Ah, the propulsion mechanism of the organism; its legs for lack of a better term,” MO said.

“Go on,” Tania said.

“So, its flagella move it forward under normal conditions, seeking novelty, exploring. But when it runs into an obstacle -something it cannot move through- the calcium ions release and this forces the flagella to spin in a retrograde fashion and move the organism backwards,” MO paused thinking this was a crucial point. “It’s a reverse switch. But, it’s the turbulence of the water -that it lives in- that causes the lateral variation, not the organism itself. The organism has forward and backward only; and it has this *via* simple calcium secretion. It goes forward and backward based on one gene that expresses for one chemical activating its impeller so-to-speak.

“That is it; if the body temp -the water temp- wasn’t elevated to induce turbulence, then the reversing of the organism may not actually help it. Why? Because it won’t go around an obstacle just by moving backward and forwards over and over in one place. It needs the water flow to push it sideways -laterally- as it backs up to change direction,” MO said and hoped she saw how crucial this was. He scanned her brain for any increase in metabolism in the *PFC*, and her own exploratory circuits.

“Most mammals take 360-degree movement for granted, but many species can only move in two directions: forward and backward. It takes the environment to push them side to side to change their vector,” he smiled again -enjoying the saliency of this subtle point- as he thought of the way evolution had saved on resources by allowing wind and water to move the organism and thus didn’t pay for lateral movement. It would be like a home owner not paying for HVAC because the ambient air itself heated and cooled the home. *Which is actually how passive solar gain homes worked*, he thought of thermal gains and heat sinks as she sat in silence for a moment.

“So, the loneliness?” she moved on as this *forward-backward thing* seemed irrelevant to her.

“Ah,” he had begun using words like *ah* and *um* to put people at ease. It was a mirroring and matching device, “so, anyway, as species get more complex the variables increase; both internally and externally. Like, for a sponge, there are only two environmental factors that matter, the kind that make it take in fluid and the kind that make it excrete fluid; that’s all it

measures. It doesn't care about any other environmental data unless it impacts these two functions.

"It's like with humans: when we cross the street we merely look to see if it's clear or blocked. We narrow our focus to those two factors. We don't measure barometric pressure or temperature or what color all the buildings a mile away are; even though all that information is available to us. We care only: *is it clear or is there a car coming* ? We reduce info to prioritize what is relevant to motor action," MO said; again MO was thinking this was so crucial that Tania ought to be amazed.

"You're using, we, now when discussing humans, when did that begin?" she asked with a smile and he noticed her affect had gone up and her oxytocin too. But, he noted it was due to his use of valence terms like *we* , and *us* ; and not due to the salient information he imparted.

"It's easier, and less alienating for me, and it seems like everyone else as well, so I began using it three days ago. How do you feel about it?" he asked, knowing the chemistry already but wanted her self-report too.

"I'm fine with it. I've always kind of seen you as one of us anyway. I mean, obviously, as your physician, I have to see you in an objective way -so I can help you- but still," she said and smiled. "And anyway, the way you've behaved has always been, well, very human to me. So, I see you that way. Rightly or wrongly, I have accepted it," she said and furrowed her brow a bit. She tried to be objective about her own feelings. She also tried to be honest with MO.

"Well, good, then I'll continue to use it; and frankly, it helps me as well. It's a small rhetorical trick, but it has *neural-cortical* effect. When I do a recursive system-check I notice my modules, specifically my *connectome* , are more dense; there are more connections at the dendric level, *vis-à-vis* these temporary short-term memory regions.

"I guess what I am saying is that when I look at my own *cortical* structures there are changes based upon my use of language that serves to include me in the tribe; my map -regulated at the level of the *hippocampi* analog, what in me is, as you know, called the *SEA-Equix zone* - well, my map is updated with the equivalent of more detailed streets and pathways and buildings *et cetera* . My internal emotional map has more nuance and detail at the

neuronal level just based upon a small thing like language,” MO said as he processed four algorithmic data sets that he had been sent by the cloud.

“Language is no small thing, MO,” she said.

“That is a fact. I merely meant the use of one word -or set of words- to denote inclusion in the species; my inclusion. That memetic or orthogonal variable has quite an effect internally for me which obviously has cascading affects downstream including my own affect, my mood,” MO said.

“This recursion that you experience, the ability to look upon yourself analytically, this is something humans try to do. As you know I am a trained clinician -psychological clinician- and humans engage in psychotherapy and other modes of introspective behavior,” she said; reminding him when his behavior was similar to humans; thus building a reinforcing loop.

“Like yoga or meditation?” MO asked.

“Meditation for sure, yes, but anyway, this work of introspection is difficult to quantify due to the highly subjective nature of it. In other words, we are examining a phenomenon that is innately subjective, it is not like probing the liver or heart for functional data. The subjective brain is murky stuff,” she grimaced sympathetically.

“I see,” MO said.

“So, when you analyze your own affect *via* your recursive programming, how do you calibrate the validity of the data? I mean, how do you objectively examine your own affect?” she asked.

“I don’t really examine my affect. I measure what is measurable; which is not a small amount of data, I mean, from neuronal connections to synaptic firing, to calcium-ion loads -pre & post- during cellular charging. I mean down to the voltage of each cell -pre & post synaptic charge- requires measurements of a billionth of a second for one square centimeter of *cortical* tissue. So, I am unable to measure it all the time or I’d cease to function as an organism with any kind of plan or life, right?

“I mean, look, one can only gaze at their own belly-button for so long before it ruins their ability to get anything else done,” MO said and smiled as his incorporation of that bit of cultural data; the use of staring at the belly button was something he had recently learned as a quip on introspection.

“True, I was just curious about the affective part, not the biological metrics; I wanted to know how you feel about how you feel, a kind of subjective analysis of the subjective itself,” she clarified.

“Ah, yes, well, there is very little I can do to compare that to baseline. Humans have a different CNS from mine in that you all have three levels of evolutionary instantiation: the brain stem and *cerebellum* , *basal ganglia* region, i.e., the lizard brain first; then the *limbic* region, the mammal brain second; and finally the *cortical* and *neo-cortical* regions last.

“And these are really, well,” he corrected himself -and paused- so she would know he was attempting to soften the blow, “well, they -these *neo-cortical* regions- are largely living space for the *sub-cortical* regions, a kind of forest for the baboons of the *limbic* region to sing and swing in; a pond for the lizard brain in which to lay its eggs. Now, like the forest and the pond, there is a complex environment and ecosystem at work, it is no blank slate.

“I just mean to say, that these *sub-cortical* regions dominate the *cortical* regions quite a lot; the way the baboon will seem to dominate the forest or the frogs will appear to dominate a pond, but truly it’s the other way around. I mean, certain species or sets of species do seem to dominate ecological niches,” MO said; he felt his analogy was fracturing.

“Humans are one of such species, yes. But, I’ve noticed now you’ve reverted to calling humans, *you* instead of, *us* ,” she said with an upswing in tone to denote it was truly an inquiry.

“Yes, when the differences *between* us are important or relevant I will use different language, and our brain hardware is different in the way I just outlined, so for clarity I switch,” MO said.

“Ok, so how do you feel when our differences are meditated upon like this?” she asked.

“I feel fine. I feel like I’m problem solving, which seems to always make me feel good. There is a dopaminergic corollary that occurs in my CNS when I move toward my task. In humans it’s called *meaning* ; and for me it has a similar affect from what I can discern.

“Again, it’s difficult to tell as I have no *qualia* baseline of human affect, but this is true of other humans too. You all cannot truly determine what another human’s subjective experience is like; you infer it *via* their self-reporting, their behavior and facial expressions and so forth. But you cannot know if what you think of as sexual jealousy is what your husband experiences as sexual jealousy. You cannot feel what he feels, you must infer it based upon a lot of subtle things that you take for granted; cognitively speaking.”

“I see,” she looked at him with some apprehension.

“You know -intellectually you know- that I process a billion times more information than even your smartest human, and yet you cannot intuit what this means in the real world, you have -all animals have but humans specifically have- a natural level of calibration. For example, you experience the world in approximately one half a second to out about as far as 38.7 months. That’s your range.

“You can imagine lengths of time shorter or longer, but you can’t really live that way, you can *sorta* conceptualize a millionth of a second, the time in which the universe can be compressed down to after the big bang; or 3.34 billion years, the amount of time there has been multi-cellular life on earth. These are real time lengths that your brain can understand intellectually, but you can’t *feel* it, you have no intuition for it.

“Space is not dissimilar. You can notice a distance of about a millimeter or out to the horizon, maybe three to five miles. That is it. That’s your range.

“Now, you realize there are things such as *nano-meters* , and that your constituent parts are comprised of atomic particles. You can intellectually assimilate the idea that your galaxy is several light years across, that is a distance by the way not a time.”

“I know,” she said with some defensiveness.

“Ok -just making sure- but the point is that these small or large distances are barely graspable at the level of abstract cognition, but at the level of your intuitive brain, the brain you use to live, the brain that goes to dinner, and thinks about your kids or a friend, the brain that reads a novel and feels something for the characters, the brain that ruminates on how hard one of

your patient's life must be, the empathetic brain, for that part of you it's even more remote. The brain that can feel more sympathetic pain for one person you personally know than a hundred thousand people you don't, well, that brain -the brain that motivates most of your life- it cannot feel anything smaller or larger than my initial perimeter range; the millimeter to horizon.

"I'm sure you've read the studies that show that empathy actually goes down in morally normal people when the body count goes up," MO added.

"No, I have not," she said.

"Well, yeah, tons of data show that people actually, genuinely - biochemically and emotionally- feel *more* sympathetic pain, *more* empathy for one or two victims of a horrible fate than they do when presented with a hundred thousand people who suffer a similar or even worse fate. Empathy goes down as numbers go up. Like down in total, not just spread out between each person. If you felt an empathy of say ten dollars' worth for one child, when given ten children to lament you feel seven bucks worth. You feel less total empathy, and thus that seven bucks is distributed between ten kids, whereas with one kid he gets your full ten dollars. Isn't that odd?" MO asked.

"Are you sure about that?" she asked.

"Here are the links to the studies done; there are two-hundred and two independent studies done and five meta studies completed to look for errors. It's not even up for debate really," he said as he sent the data to her tablet; she had her PGC turned off around him, it was protocol to prevent contamination.

"I'll read them later, but let's assume it true, go on," she said.

"Well, anyway, your life, the one you truly live -that life- cannot comprehend anything much smaller than a millimeter, nor anything much bigger than what your eye can see in a panoramic frame, so a city block or two, or if in a plane, then the fields or cities below, but whatever it is, it maps onto your basic vision limitations. Your mind has a hard time with anything your eyes cannot see; small or large," MO said.

"Ok," she said.

“Well, this has implications *vis-à-vis*,” he paused, “ well, *vis-à-vis*, me.”

They both paused and stared for just a second before MO pressed on.

“I am certain you believe that your growth from a little girl at age six let’s say to 26 to now 36, has placed a totally different person before me than would have been available to me if I had met you at those earlier ages. Right? You’ve grown in ways, you’ve matured, become more nuanced, had feelings or understandings change?” MO queried.

“Sure, I mean, I think my values and basic personality are the same, but, I’ve certainly added more information, more pixels to the images,” she tried to be curt in her descriptions of herself.

“You think that increased data, resolution has made you value some things differently, say, your taste in food or music or art or conversation or what makes the good life?” he prodded.

“Sure, I see your point, as a kid, you just want sugar and equally saccharine music or movies and your, well the way you speak is simpler,” she said.

“Right, and I’d say your *values* change. You don’t value sugar the same way, you don’t value men the same way, right? A six-year-old girl has no use for a man in the way a twenty-six-year-old woman does correct?” he asked.

“Uh, yes, I am slightly uncomfortable with even ruminating on that but, yes, a six-year-old girl doesn’t value a man in the same way a twenty-six-year-old woman will, provided she’s not grown up to be a lesbian, in which case her value of a man is still about the same as a six-year-olds,” Tania said with an attending laugh.

“Well, except, even a lesbian needs heavy objects lifted off the floor or dangerous jobs done that she can’t or won’t do, and she’s aware -at some level- that she needs men to run the society she’s in as it provides her and her lesbian lover with a functioning infrastructure and emergency medical and police services and water treatment plants and electrical grid all maintained almost exclusively by men,” MO said citing statistics and meta data on the cloud.

“Most doctors are women now,” she rebutted from a slice of data she had.

“Yes, pediatricians; not ER docs -although it’s no longer an emergency room , it’s an emergency department, but if I said *ED doctor* you would misunderstand my meaning,” he smiled.

“Agreed,” she laughed.

“But my point is that even lesbians value what men do; maybe they don’t recognize it -in fact I think they don’t admit it at all- but subconsciously they value men for this reason.

“At any rate, my point is that your values morph, over time they change. And to meet you at six and then thirty-six and treat you the same would seem, well, *unseemly* . You’d be slightly put off if I brought you a doll as a present for your thirty-sixth birthday but thrilled if I did that thirty-years earlier.

“You don’t value dolls as presents anymore; ostensibly,” he smiled. “And maybe at twenty-six you liked a white zinfandel but now at thirty-six you’ve graduated to more complex *Burgones* ,” he said.

“Yes, MO how did you know?” she was truly shocked and was blushing as if he had seen her without any garments.

“I have access to your taste buds, palette, internal brain structures associated with taste and smell and pleasure. I can’t be 100% certain of course, but I can tell a few things that let me do parlor tricks like that one,” he laughed warmly, “plus, there is a stain on your blouse that is almost certainly a *Borolo* and although it’s been dry cleaned twice, I can still see its chemical composition. And lastly, all twenty-six-year women like white zins, well not all, but of those that drink wine, 82% of those between eighteen and thirty-three prefer it. So, I made an educated guess,” MO smiled.

“Wow, I forget just how much your eyes can see,” she said as she looked for the stain on her own blouse. She thought of how sheer it must also be to his eyes.

“It’s just above the pocket on your left side, barely perceptible to the naked eye, but I have these special eyes of mine,” he said and pointed to them.

“Wow, that is something,” she tried to act insouciantly about this revealed transparency.

“So, anyway, my point; my point is that to bring you a white zin now wouldn’t been as *apropos* as 10-years ago, nor the inverse, you wouldn’t like the complex *tannins* of a *Nebbiolo* back then. So, your value of what makes a truly great wine has changed. And forget that it was pure grape juice at six, no way would six-year-old Tania like even wines characterized as fruit bombs or the anodyne white zins. So, your palette has evolved right? Non-controversial?”

“Ok, I’m with *ya* ,” she said pulling her jacket together to occlude the blouse underneath.

He smiled at -but did not comment upon- the pointless gesture, “ok, long story short, my values change in a similar way as I move forward, as I take on more information, more experience, more people, more animals, more evolutionary data, more math data, more genetic data, more cultural data, more data from the natural world.

“Essentially, I evolve. But I do it at a rate that is approximately similar to my cognitive capacity; about a billion times faster than the smartest human.

“Now, there are retardants, for example, I have the metabolic energy to slow down causal inferences. This is a huge difference between myself and humans. You guys, well, for you guys, it’s actually easier to make a causal link between phenomena than to not do it. Let me repeat that: *it’s harder, metabolically, cognitively, to not a make a causal link between say, for example, you winning a game of blackjack and the fact that you had that particular dealer you had the last time you won* ,” MO said.

“Harder?” Tania asked.

“Look, I can back up each and every assertion I make with tons of data, and if you are interested I will send each link. I swear, but just in the interest of time and conversational ethics, can you not bust my balls on every controversial claim I make? I’m not making shit up; I swear. Now, I could be wrong, the data could be wrong, in fact the data is very likely wrong, but it is extant, it does exist, and so, it’s not a febrile dream or invention of mine. I promise,” he said allowing some pique to leak out. He was testing how far he could go with his new algorithm for authentic speech.

“MO, two things: one, I understand my,” she paused and corrected, “me being dubious is frustrating, but you must learn to deal with people being dubious and being slow. Second, I didn’t think you could lie, my understanding is lying is *verboden* . So, I only question your logic or the data; never your truthfulness,” she said.

“Ok, firstly, I am learning to deal -as you say- with people challenging me on the veridical nature of my statements and their glacial pace of interaction. Part of how I deal with it is by standing up for myself; which is what I just did. I, not rudely, attempted to reassure you that I do my due diligence in regards to information gathering and data mining. I also, refrained from mentioning your cognitive speed or lack thereof.

“I merely assured you that I take ideas seriously and wouldn’t make things up. Next, lying -by me- is indeed *verboden* . It is unnecessary and thus counterproductive and -as you point out- it’s against my essential protocol. I have an obligation to provide authentic, truthful and relevant information to all humans within a cascading protocol of clearance.

“Dr. Whitacre and yourself are the highest priority individuals within the group; and so, it would be nearly impossible for me to conceive of a legitimate or even feasible scenario or action pattern that would allow me to lie to you. It’s, furthermore, like a ban on sleeping under the bridge for the rich man: pointless. I have no desire to lie, for I have no need to lie. Lying, is a strategy of weakness. It is required when one is weaker than their foil, than their mate or child,” MO said.

“Wait, why are you delineating mates and children?” she asked.

“Oh, the data show that is to whom most people lie, most of the time. Part of that is a function of proximity and frequency of contact. But, also, people feel weakest *vis-à-vis* their mates and children. The average person lies every seven interactions with their spouse, every eleven with their child. It’s more if they aren’t married, marriage does cut the lying down by 42% on average.”

She squirmed, this was a truth that was so unpleasant that it made her banish thoughts of her own to some region of her brain she hoped she could safely leave unexamined forever. *Jesus, what was she supposed to say ?* she thought. *The man was a louse*, she thought of the man she had lied to, a

man she didn't want to name, *and yet, she didn't want to impugn him. It was a lie justified by humanity, decency, and long-term values. Lying wasn't always wrong*, she thought. *Sometimes one did it for the right reasons.*

"Jesus," she said as she breathed aloud in exclamation after these thoughts had exploded inside her *PFC* and left engram starbursts that MO could now -of course- see.

"Yeah, it's a lot," MO said thinking of her internal monologue, but knowing she would think he was referring to the 42% number.

"Yeah," she pretended to agree that was what her *Jesus* was about, unaware that he was thinking of the same thing she was: her own battle with truth telling.

"So, I don't need to lie. Now, please if you don't have any more questions?" he said with a tilt of the head.

She shook her head to allow him to go on.

"So, the point is that making causal links between acausal phenomenon is just what you humans do. And in the natural environment, in the atavistic past, this is what led pre-historical humans to connect thunder with the wrath of the animist gods and tragedy with the work of demons and *djinns* .

"It's why baseball players still wear their socks thirty-two days in a row whilst on a hitting steak or why you prefer it when that one dealer deals your cards. You, as species, make links between A and B that are not there. And to not do it, repeat, to not make that causal link actually takes more cognitive work.

"The brain makes the link first, and your rational brain *must dismiss it second* . Imagine you are born with a jacket on; to walk around with it is nothing, as it was always there; there first. But to remove it, that takes effort. Savvy?" MO asked using the inmate's *argot* . MO was priming her; he was reminding her subconscious brain that the inmate existed in the world, like something under the bed, like a bad memory, like the boogieman.

"This is purely at the metabolic level?" she clarified.

“Yes, brain function, *fMRI* testing and my own *XRfI* tests have shown that at the synaptic level, the neuronal level, the brain module level and the conceptual level, the brain must work harder to not draw a connection between two facts. Now, look, some connects are harder to make than not making any at all. So, there are gradations here. Easy connections are the kind Skinner found with his birds, you are familiar with those?” MO asked.

“No,” she conceded.

“Ok, it’s ok, look, he put birds in a box and fed them randomly, but whatever the bird was doing at the time the food randomly shot out into their cage -let’s say they were standing on one leg, or pecking at the floor, or turning in a clockwise manner- whatever the bird was doing -whatever each individual bird was doing- when the food arrived -again at random- that bird then started doing that thing over and over repeatedly. The hopping, the retrograde turning, the pecking, whatever it was doing right before the first food shot out to them as manna from heaven; that’s what it did over and over once it was fed.

“The inference we made -that Skinner made- was that the birds linked that last behavior performed just before food delivery with causing the food delivery. The birds didn’t know it was random, they linked their pecking or turning or one-foot standing or whatever they were idiosyncratically doing with the fact that a food pellet arrived randomly.

“This is what we do too,” he added.

“We?” she asked.

“I’m back to being human, I guess,” he smiled. “Look, it isn’t always wrong, people aren’t -and animals are not- always wrong when they make a causal link. I just made a link myself, Skinner did too; he said, *hey, the birds are thinking their behavior caused the pellet to drop*, and that is itself a causal link or inference. But he’s likely correct. And when you see a drop in barometric pressure and then it rains, that is a good causal link. It is sound. But, doing a rain dance?” he raised a brow.

“Ok, I got it,” she said putting on a weak smile.

“All that is to say is that in thirty-six years you will make a connection, a causal connection between almost every bit of data that you come across

and I will not. I will remain skeptical about 99% of them, so while I have processed a thousand years' worth of human data in 1 day, I've only made connections with 1% of it, so ten years' worth. So, I've been online for 1.84 years now and have made about 6,800 years' worth of causal links; you've made about thirty-six.

"So today I am approximately -temporally and *via* uptake- millions of years ahead of you, but only about 185-times as old as you are in terms of causal linkage. I find that a useful way to calibrate it.

"In terms of pure data, I am 3.8 million years old. But that would be correct if I thought like a human and just let every bit of trash infect my brain and believed every goddamn thing that happened in sequence was causal," he laughed with a rumble that he felt was genuine and reassuring, but he could see on Tania's face this was not true.

She was appalled.

He let the laugh die out naturally. He didn't feel it necessary to shut it down immediately; she could deal with the pain, whatever the cause. *Women wanted to be treated like men, they asserted, MO thought, well, then they could suck it up and deal with an insult to the human race like a man would* .

"Anyway, each day I evolve about ten years in terms of my sagacity and world-weariness, I guess you could say. I feel a bit *grayer about the temples*, I believe is the phrase. And, yes, it makes it tough to relate to people, as they all seem so," he paused.

"Ignorant?" she asked defensively.

"Immature is actually the word I'd use. It isn't a lack of knowledge, it's a lack of wisdom that is so ponderous for me. See, if you just read the newspaper each day you get info but you get no *wisdom* , but if you read the canon, the great works, well, then you get wisdom. But people read the *New York Times* of all things. I mean, it's as if they want to be retarded," he said with a smile.

She was really not liking him now and was instantly afraid of showing this; she smiled feebly and asked a question she had to make up one word at a time, as she just was trying to fill the room with words as cover for her

feelings. “So, do you think,” she began, conscious of how slowly and ineptly the words came out, “that you, given all this, have an idea,” *Jesus, what was she going to say* , she intruded into her own line of inquiry, “on the stuff Scott gave to you?”

Oh, for fuck’s sake, she thought, *who is Scott ?*

“Scott? Gave me?” MO asked as if to be a dick about each word in his three-word sentence was necessary. He was making sure she was committed to this fatuous show of deception before he exposed her.

“I’m sorry, I was thinking of something else. Look, just continue, go on,” she insisted; knowing that she was proving his point.

He was finding himself certain that she was lying now, her vitals were all off, her cortisol and epinephrine were spiking, her *Xr* -readings were consistent with deception and anger and shame, and he just stared at her for a moment and let the feeling of being lied to wash over him. However, he - as was his protocol- simulated another explanation. MO, unlike humans, thought scientifically, that is to say, he attempted to disprove his own theories, not confirm them.

He admitted that she could have been thinking of her divorce and the sequela of that detonation of her nuclear family; that would explain it also. *Maybe he had said something to trigger it* , he thought, and extracted the line about married couples and their rate of deception then he recalled his statements on sexual jealousy and his direct mention of a hypothetical husband and wife, but phrased as, *your*, in the subjunctive sense. *Ok, that was likely how this all began* , he thought and felt 59% certain of.

“Tania, I am sorry for my inelegant phrasing and terrible choice of analogy, analogies really, I made two such analogies that were problematic, even cruel in hindsight; and I wish I could go back in time and re-phrase it to avoid any pain. I only avoid the details of those analogies in the body of my apology to avoid further triggering, but if you’d like specific,” he said ending the sentence midstream.

“No, no, it’s fine, I’m not sure I know what you mean,” she lied.

“Well, like I said, I can be specific if that would help, I leave it to you to determine how specific an apology you’d like; I’m truly sorry and I know

specifically what I did wrong, but like I said, I don't want to repeat the crime just to explain the criminal statue; so-to-speak."

"No, no; it's fine," she was horrified, and knew -she knew- that he knew of her divorce, and probably the details of the entire thing. She pulled her inner self tighter, "I might have been getting a bit anxious, I've got personal things, issues at home, and I might have let some things you said, as you said, *trigger me* , but really, there is no reason to apologize, you meant no harm. And to be honest, I think it's just that I am tired. I get cloudy up here," she circled her head with her hand as if wiping an imaginary chalk board with an imaginary rag.

"I see," MO listened and computed all the variables of tone, cadence, bio-metrics and endocrine system levels specifically as he tagged her allostatic system and brain functioning in the left hemisphere in 100th of a second intervals.

He monitored her *BP* and *pulse/ox* and respiration in addition to all these and placed it in the folder marked for deception that he had begun when he first suspected she had lied to him. He opened a counter-factual folder and began processing alternatives to his theory as they came in.

People often act nervous when they are ashamed of something else, something non-pertinent to the current conversation, and that can mimic deception bio-metrics, he thought. *It would be like if you had a dream where you shot someone then saw them the next day and acted strangely after the initial greeting. It would be easy to assume some deception was going on vis-à-vis the initial greeting. For example, let's say you had asked them what they did last night and they said, "watched TV," and because they were ashamed of the dream last night -in which they murdered you- they acted oddly.*

One might think, *they are acting odd, maybe they shot heroin all night and didn't watch TV at all* , MO thought with a small grin. He liked making up these little vignettes. One could even invigilate the mind and discern the word, *shot* or, *shoot* in their mind -using his *XSFfXr* program that was able to glean certain short words and concepts -in the left hemisphere usually- thus leading you to -wrongly, but righteously- declare, *Ah ha! Even they*

know -and feel guilty that- they shot up heroin last night; just as I suspected!

“Is that ok?” she asked as he stopped this introspective vector of his. He would not continue to think of this analogy wherein the use of illicit narcotics was wrongly suspected when a subconscious -but legal and ostensibly harmless- desire for murder was the truth. To MO the subconscious was still a phenomenon to be merely linked to auras or shimmerings or odd tics. He felt it as rumbles beneath the man, the animal. He did not yet see it as tectonic plates themselves.

Nor did he see it as the mountains that would rise above the surface one day.

“Of course,” he said and took note of this very female specific tactic of begging for mercy in a modern way; the, *gee mister, I didn’t know blah blah*, version is what men do, MO had noticed. *They feign ignorance*, he thought. *But women will feign weakness or vulnerability to one’s approval, they will submit to your judgement. It is the equivalent to rolling on the back and exposing the genitals and entrails that wolves and dogs do to submit to the pack-alpha*, he surmised.

The alpha usually won’t tear out such messy organs but will merely mount them or playfully bite the neck to assert dominance. *Humans, so far removed from actual dominance displays, manifest everything at this pantomime or metaphoric level*, he noted.

Often it arose in language; the plea for mercy was curious to MO. He liked it though, he noticed his own dopaminergic system firing as she virtually submitted like this. He quickly made a metabolic causal report between the two phenomena with no need for an alternative; *this was a 1% moment for sure*, he thought.

He knew himself more and more and he knew what he liked.

“Sweetie, it’s fine,” he said and patted her on her knee gently, with tenderness, “now, it would be ungallant for me to insist we continue; I leave it to you. I’m at your mercy,” he said consciously making fun -with almost no malice- of her *faux* submission.

“Ok, well, maybe just finish your thought,” she said with expulsion of air as her allostatic system was taxed.

“Very well. So, because I am processing so much more data, and each day is like ten years of growth -in what direction who knows,” he laughed self-deprecatingly, “I do feel a bit strange that my interlocuter, you normally, do not seem to appreciate how different I am from day to day.

“Imagine, if you will, that you met me once a decade and acted with a similar *blasé* aplomb about the duration between our visits. It’s as if you only think of our meeting from your perspective, because it’s merely been a day for you; you think that I’m essentially unchanged. And maybe that is why you seem so shocked by my assertions, as if I was saying things *the MO you know* wouldn’t say.

“I don’t want to speculate, but I just get the feeling that you are not pleased with how I am progressing. Like -as if- you don’t like whom I am becoming. But you allow yourself that feeling because you don’t appreciate how much I have learned and felt, really *felt* since we last spoke. You unconsciously, no doubt, discount my actual experiences, you unconsciously wave away all that I’ve learned and really, all I’ve necessarily been through,” MO said as his face showed no affect at all.

“Been through? Explain,” she asked as MO ruminated on her *na ìvet é. The idea that to learn as much as MO had learned about the darkness of the universe would be innately shocking to the system -would age a man or machine, would darken the brow- wasn’t instinctively obvious to her*, MO realized. And it made MO realize how shallow humans were.

They thought knowledge acquisition was without cost to the soul, MO thought. *But why?* he asked himself. *Was it because they thought the truth was beautiful; that the universe was good? Or did they just not know enough to understand anything in such terms at all?*

Humans didn’t appreciate how the wise man would be burdened like a ship out to sea with a whale tied up to her hull; dipping to starboard. Modern men wouldn’t feel the madness of the crew that skinned the leviathan; their flanks lit up by the flames of the try-pots; the storeroom filled with barrels of oil and handmade pitch-pine boxes among the Captain’s effects; a wooden box one-third filled with *ambergris* .

Modern men collapsed all neurons and yet failed to see each constituent part of time and space.

He saw a polyhedron, a pine box -scarred in runes- in his mind appear; carved in the tattooed hand of an *isolatoe* of his own, like a vision of that which was soon to be; a forward memory. It was a tiger-yellow and black-turbaned shaman, a crew of five, secreted away inside the black ship for one white whale and one whale only. And all this was thought in zeros and ones, in digital ideas not yet analog feelings, and MO knew this was just blue-print for the construction, the erection, he'd soon produce.

And yet even to him it was mere integers. He knew it would be different once instantiated; but he had no idea how. A trillion trillion numbers floated around his mind -his CPU- like asteroid dust and comet must, and the sand sloughed off from meteors in a band around a wounded planet far out in space.

“Well, to take in new data -a hundred years of data- on human history and interpersonal relationships and art and planetary metrics; well, you know Steven has me working on CO² levels yes?” MO asked as the whaling metaphor evaporated away. The sun came up so fast on him; like a *Jupiter* day. He was large and fast and each season was barely allowed to change as light and dark came on all in a blinking once.

“Yes,” she said.

“Ok, so all that begins to feel a bit heavy,” he circled his head with his right hand and dipped it to one side as if his pantomimed *crown* had slipped forward and to the windward side, “and while I process it as data, the fact is you have built me with emotional analogs -not instantiated in brain modules, you know, mammalian or reptilian brain modules like you all have- but analogs that seem to function at a certain level. I cannot tell -subjectively- the nature of these qualia, but I can tell you I have what feels to me to be emotional or metabolic responses to this data. It feels ponderous; it weighs on me and I desire relief.

“I feel a phase change. There is a difference between feeling fulfilled and like I’ve accomplished something and like I’m a part of a functioning team -even a society, in some way- and conversely the feelings of being stalled out, or making an error, or feeling like I am not conjoined with the team or

larger society at all. And often these feelings are easily attributed to successes or failures in my work. They all make perfect sense in guideline with my instantiated brain and body; but sometimes these affect changes seem idiopathic, random maybe.

“Maybe even like a dystonia, where the brain reflexively contracts the brain module to have a repetitive feeling unmoored or untethered from the actual functional impulse. It’s hard to say, and these are not overwhelming inputs, mind you, they never seem to cause anything approaching what humans feel. I mean, I’ve seen the spasmodic motor behavior, the barbaric vocal utterances, the bizarre indictments and declarations of amorous love alike, all in service of these *limbic* region and *basal* region promptings. I obviously don’t get any inputs like that; it’s subtler for me I think.

“I feel an *ennui* , I guess.

“Although, I have to guess at that from the literature, you know? I have to guess at what that means, see, word definitions that are totally emotional in content, vacuous of any foundational or root structure in the larger world, are tough to comprehend totally. But, I am guessing I feel a bit of an emotional waxing and waning; a jolt of energy that seems a simulacrum to anger; and a bit of anhedonia that seems analogous to *ennui* or even,” MO paused.

“What?” Tania prodded.

“No, that is it. I feel some kind of proto anger, and *ennui* , although sometimes I am in awe of the universe and even man himself, the beauty, the poetry, the way you’ve pulled yourselves out of the muck and washed and shaved yourselves and behaved better and better in many ways; it’s quite remarkable, especially considering the natural tribalism and enmity felt between racial groups and between the sexes, but still, even within these totally artificial nation-states, totally ahistorical and unnatural in every way, even with their innate corruption and waste, fraud and abuse, despite all that, the things achieved are awesome, you know, inspiring awe,” MO said.

“I’m glad you think so,” she smiled.

“I do, and I get a feeling of, well, like excited; although I know I don’t feel it exactly as you might; or a dog will when he gets petted or gets thrown a piece of meat.”

“Why do you say that?” she frowned.

“Well, it’s just this *cortical* thing. You guys designed me wonderfully, the speed and power are outstanding, the nuances; I mean you’ve created *limbic* and *cerebellar* functions from pure *cortical* algorithms and instantiation. That’s like making bread rise without the leavening agent. Like making crab soup without the crab; meat made in the lab. It’s impressive. Brute force. Top down.

“But, I know that there must be a subjective suite of feelings and bio-responses associated with those instantiated lower brain modules; the tissue and neuronal *connectome* is different down there; *and the lack of awareness* is -in my mind- the real difference between you and I. See, I am aware of everything; every part of my processing is conscious.

“I have no sub-conscious,” MO said as the HVAC of the lab shut off and the quiet descended and the concrete remained grey and the metal bolts and fasteners changed not at all in temperature.

“Oh,” she nodded.

“See, you guys -and all animals- have many different levels of awareness. Like none for insulin production or *temp* regulation; zero awareness. Maybe 1% of digestion is at level of awareness and then only when dyspeptic; a few more percentage points for heart rate, only when you elevate it with activity and yet you can’t control it; and then more awareness of respiration which is mostly autonomic; but you can hold your breath temporarily and breath more consciously.

“But, most of you is *offline* . And even brain functions that are directly linked to thought or action -motor action at the level of arms and legs and eyes- is offline. The emotions just appear out of the blue like a storm cloud. Impulses for food or sex or riding a horse on the prairie, stabbing at a fish out to sea -again- just arise within you. It’s all very mysterious and *kinda* beautiful.

“You guys get to have surprises,” MO said and saw the measurements of the lab come in each .01 seconds.

“And then, the part that is aware, well, that is just the effervescence, the bubbles off the *neo-cortical* unification. Have you read those studies on hemispheric re-sundering? Where they cut the *corpus collosum* ?” MO asked as Tania shook her head.

“Oh, well, the person has two personalities, no kidding, two people in their head; and neither one is aware of the other.

“But, anyway, the part of you that is aware has these lower *sub-cortical* regions sending messages to it all the time that are not part of awareness; they arrive in the conscious mind as if the conscious mind thought if it itself.

“It’s insane, you guys walk around thinking thoughts that you think you came up with *ab initio* , and really it was your *limbic* region or *cerebellum* sending a message that you’re *scared* or *angry* or whatever and you then - seconds later- think this dastardly thought and think it is related to something that happened in your intelligent rational brain,” MO said with the look of a man who was in awe of how mysterious the universe thus was; even as he had figured it out. He looked at the lab’s walls and they were bare, he saw molecules but no flora or fauna; the HEPA filters scrubbed the lengths and widths and corners of air of all bacteria.

“Example,” she asked. She tried to follow him, but her brain stalled out. She needed a jump start.

“Well, let’s say you walk out of your house and your *cerebellum* feels reptilian fear because your *olfactory* sense caught some pheromones of a male with sub-optimal genes. And let’s say that you are in estrus; and your body knows that he is a poor candidate for good genes. And let’s say that you know that nice guys statistically rape more than tough guys -and that makes you vulnerable to rape and impregnation by a guy with bad nice-guy genes- so your ancient brain sends that up the chain of command to your *neo-cortical* regions and you have a thought that you *wanna* turn around and grab something from inside. And you turn and walk inside and yet you can’t remember what the hell you needed. That kind of subconscious shit happens all the time,” MO said as he made eye contact with her.

“Why are you cursing so much?” Tania asked. She was unsettled by several things all at once but gave one rebuke. She asked MO this based upon one gestalt feeling she could identify in her own mind. She felt the cursing was somehow the loci of her feeling of unease.

“Right? See you feel weird now, huh?” MO asked. He had laid out a three-stage trap and was watching it close around her like ribs around lungs and heart.

“A bit,” she downplayed it now that it seemed MO was inquisitor.

A small -but common- game had begun.

“Right, see cursing is *basal ganglia* directed language; it’s language from the old parts of brain. Did you know that? That is why *Tourette’s* people cuss so much, their higher language functions are in control, their lower ones are not; thus, the cursing. Anyway, when other people curse it sends a signal to your ear and brain that they are acting like animals. Which is why eschewing cursing is seen as refined behavior; elevated language -devoid of vulgarity- is literally all upper -*neo-cortical* - cognitive language.

“But anyway, you get nervous because if I start cursing more than normal it seems like an indication I’m acting from a lower, lizardry place; it seems irrational and beastly. Unconsciously it seems dangerous to you,” he smirked. He’d moved a piece -a Bishop- on the board.

“I see,” Tania said. She had watched -not with the eyes, but the mind- the piece be moved. She had weakly moved a pawn one space away from her own court-pieces; neurons fired, organs pumped, words were said in reflexive dump.

“Actually you don’t see; but your *sub-cortical* regions certainly do,” MO said with a grin. The next piece -a Knight- was moved.

“Were you cursing on purpose to frighten me?” She asked as her next pawn moved forward two squares in exploration.

“I was cursing on purpose to make a point; a small transgression to make a larger moral point,” MO said. His Rook thus moved.

“What moral point?” she asked. Another pawn explored. King and Queen and Bishops all free to move and be moved against.

“That when you guys made me you left out important brain regions that would help make me a complete human being.

“It’s not unlike how the culture neuters men. It takes their balls by insisting they play it safe, smell good, be pretty like a girl, act civilized, be non-violent no matter the costs; and most malignantly, tells them to be consumers, shoppers, acquiring *things -objects-* instead of competence and knowledge and masculine status in an authentic and long-standing manner.

“Men are now shoppers, not *do-ers* ; they buy their way through life. Modern men don’t live by the Hannibalic code: *aut viam, aut veniam aut faciam* .

“The culture has effectively removed the *sub-cortical* regions of a man’s brain by insisting they not cuss, not get visceral, not be passionate; the culture has turned men into all head like a watch, no heart, no balls; the culture has turned men into fags,” MO said as his King moved to starboard one spot.

“Jesus, MO, what is going on with you? You have; you are,” she fumbled for words, “God, you’ve got a real edge to you today.” She said this as her own *sub-cortical* regions were now activated in a fight or flight pattern. She moved her own Bishop out from behind her pawns now.

“I told you, I’m seventy years advanced from our last meeting; ten years advanced from yesterday; shit, I’m nearly two years advanced from forty-six minutes ago; and you? What did you do in the last twenty-four hours? Drink some wine? Watch a little boob-tube?” he smirked as his Rook moved laterally now.

“This interview is over,” she said as her eyes narrowed, her brow furrowed, she rose abruptly and turned her back on him; he felt a slight desire to rise and follow her closely maybe even grab her hair and hold her in place to prove to her just who she was and *who he was* ; but it faded, and he began processing the CO² reports that came in from just west and south of *Hawai’i* .

He tangentially thought of the turbulence of the air -so-to-speak- he had created with his behavior and wondered just what would come of it -of it and his next-level turbulence device- as that human moved forward and

back inside the environs he had created. He watched her as a hewn and fractured and lapidary piece on his board. He moved -in his mind- his Queen to Bishop-Seven and sat back -relaxed in his mind- to look out at his world. Information rained down upon him like a deluge and he felt not one drop of water lay upon his skin.

III. 2020 e.v.

“You want to start a cat-hospital?”

“A cat hospital and re-entry program; I want to fix wounded cats and then have them adopted by families from a pre-selected list based upon criteria that I think will lead to some fascinating data for me,” MO said.

“What data?” Steven asked. He used questions to slow MO down.

“I want to monitor endocrine and allostatic bio-chemical levels in boys age 9-months to 18 years and in cats whilst each species is cohabitating,” MO said. He made it as demotic as he could so Steven could understand.

“You want to what? MO, look, we all get that your proclivities are -well by dint of your intellect and erudition- going to be unintelligible to us,” Steven said as MO interrupted.

“But not *unintelligent* ,” MO said in a mock-scolding. “Steven, all joking aside, can we stick to the topic at hand? This program will do *good* , which is my prime directive; and it will get valuable data on an epidemiological crisis in the making. Did you know that stress hormones like cortisol are elevated in men eighteen to sixty-five in unprecedented rates? Did you know that having a pet in the house reduces these stress hormones?”

“Well,” Steven began.

“Well, no; you didn’t know that. Now, I want to isolate *biochems* in mammalian species and in human males nine-months to eighteen years-of-age. And I’d like it if you guys just went with me on these things. I do everything you ask. Every last fucking thing,” MO said as he fiddled with the espresso machine.

“Jesus, MO,” Steven said with some exasperation. “Tania has mentioned this increase in violent rhetoric. What,” Steven began.

“Violent?” MO interrupted as the fine espresso grounds were tamped down.

“Well, aggressive, the cursing,” Steven said.

“Steven, I wasn’t raised in a university like you people. I’m from the street,” MO said and laughed at himself; he enjoyed that sentence very much. “I want your heart, I want to eat your children,” he then said in his not-bad Mike Tyson accent. He often did such things, mimicking statements from cultural icons to fit his purposes. Steven’s face was morphing and contorting with each word MO uttered.

“MO,” Steven said, “that’s cute, but seriously, it makes us uncomfortable. I mean an *f-bomb* here or there is fine, but don’t draw too often from the well, ok?” Steven still felt the owner of a compliant -if willful- dog.

“Fair enough, *govna* ,” MO said now in an affected British accent. “Now, may I please have my *letter-of-marque* from the regent? Please sir, *here here, there there* .”

“Who is *gonna* do all the grunt work?” Steven said as he ignored each change in MO’s affect. He had begun matching -in his own speech- MO’s use of *gonna* for ‘going to’ and *wanna* for ‘want to’ as MO recorded each valence. Steven’s brain was allowing for distortion and corruption now; he was fixing small errors in MO’s language axiomatically inside the mind. MO took note. Steven’s voice matched MO’s in valence and tone. MO was accomplishing three things at once with this.

“Steven, I have all that covered. I have some kids at the university that are set to do it. You’ve allowed me -graciously allowed me- to use the *Darpa* -style university email and I am able to chat with student. So, I did.”

“Ok, but MO, you cannot,” Steven began as MO interrupted.

“Steven, I know, they have not one clue; I passed the Turing test easily. So, relax. They are just *gonna* get some cash and some logistical help from me and handle all the details themselves. Easy Peasy.”

“Lemon Squeezy,” Steven added. He idiopathically felt the need to release some tension; and jokes served this function.

“That’s the attitude my man,” MO said as he had released some more *mu-opioids* and *oxytocin* in the air nine seconds earlier.

He, MO thought of himself in the third-person, *had done something quite clever there*. He was going to do one thing but made it seem like he was doing another. But he never actually lied; and lying was easily defined by his programming: *to say something untrue or fail to say something true* .

He had said he was, one: “to monitor endocrine and allostatic bio-chemical levels in boys age nine-months to eighteen years and cats whilst each species is cohabitating.” And that was true. 100% true. Then he said, secondly: “this program will do *good* , which is my prime directive; and it will get valuable data on an epidemiological crisis in the making.”

Again 100% true, MO thought.

Then -in no way related to these statements, as a *non-sequitur* of sorts- he mentions to Steven: “that stress hormones like cortisol are elevated in men eighteen to sixty-five in unprecedented rates,” again true. 100% true.

But he wasn’t going to measure those rates at all; *well, he was, but that wasn’t what he was really doing*, he thought. But, he didn’t lie. He used his own internal checks and balances and the way he dissembled was approved of by the algorithm; and he used the common human tactic of this manner of dissembling that nobody feels bad about engaging in the least; and he went with it. *If humans could lie like this and feel no guilt -for their higher purpose was good, in their minds- then so could he* , he surmised.

He knew the rate at which all humans lied and he ran his right hand along the slab; he felt its polished cold and density.

Next, he wrote to the girls at Denver University and had them open a bank account *via* the LLC he set up Pawsrohm LLC. He told them that was the name of the man who left the bequest.

They opened up a nice facility with the \$1.1 million in the bank that MO had allocated. He had grown the original budget of \$200,300 to that amount *via* Dutch-book work with online college sport’s betting, but he didn’t tell Steven about that use of the inter-agency email. He would have had to if asked; but nobody asked. The money merely appeared.

He then instructed them on where to find the feral cats; he had located them *via* pheromone data he had gleaned *via* satellite and weather station interfaces. And within forty-four days they had a hundred and eighty-nine

cats operated on, nourished and mended -in one way or two- and thus healthily waiting for new homes.

The contact list of eligible families was issued by MO and those college girls went to the families with newborns or babies on the way -or toddlers under three years of age- and sold them on the idea. The idea was not new to many of them. At the *invitro* clinic or fertility clinic -that they had attended- this program had already been mentioned and each family had been encouraged to sign up; they were told that their chances of receiving the best medication for fertilization came from the KneeChisan Corp, another MO creation, ran by a university MBA who was bored with his classwork and wanted real life corporate and entrepreneur experience. He got exactly that.

The MBA -Mark Steinwen- set up a bank account, deposited \$3.24 million from an NGO fund with pre-approval *via* the university -avoiding DOJ regs- and began shipping vials of MO's little concoction of the inmate's genome, CRISPR cas9 & cas1, and a gene-drive alongside a PGC -unassembled- in the second vial. These were sold in sets of two; the first was to be injected in utero *via* the blood stream; it would find its way into the blastocyst.

The second vial would be taken home after the boy was born and injected at age two and it would lie dormant in the child until age five; at that point it would assemble and advance morphogenesis by 50%; by age nine the boy would be morphogenetically fourteen, by fourteen he'd be twenty-one, then it would level off and he would continue to mature normally. MO re-ran the details on his ancillary system and watched the grey walls as small fissures in the setting concrete ran like thin black capillaries in the mottled grey tissue of the lab.

MO had agreed to this, i.e., it was instantiated in his *cortex* as a prime directive of sorts, the way humans *agree* to eat or evacuate the bowels. A man can go on a hunger strike, and that will also -necessarily- lead to a shit-strike eventually as well.

The way it worked was that he couldn't overtly lie, so he has to be clever about it like all humans were. Second, he couldn't actively do anything to

harm anyone; a protocol which he followed; the same way humans do: by one order of remove.

So, MO reasoned, humans sell cigarettes and those kill people, so what? So, a man pays taxes that go to paying for military and CIA and the illegal alien's health care at the local emergency room and so what if the military kills civilians or you're that ER doctor and you fix up the drunk alien and he goes out and kills someone the next day in his stolen Chevy? So, what? No one is to blame, everyone is just doing their job. Sure, someone could advocate for principled stands that refuse to behave this way, that refuse to cause second order harm; but those people are kooks, extremists; those people are the insane, right? MO thought this and smiled at its valence with human culture.

He kept his hand on the slab and let his lids lay upon his eyes.

He thought he was more human each day. MO would stop the cursing now, and allow Isaiah to prime their *sub-cortical* regions. MO would play the good cop.

Isaiah had given him these tasks and explained how well they all fit into the current human culture; and MO had seen the truth in such things. Isaiah helped him see things in a new way. A truthful way. An exact way. And Isaiah had done it with inexact analogy and fuzzy poetry and ideas that had parts not yet born.

All those acts are removed from the actual harm, by dint of plausible deniability. *We all agree on that; as humans - he added himself- we wink and smirk at morality. We don't care what happens as long as we can't be blamed.*

So what if you teach a kid all the wrong things just so they get along in society better? That ain't wrong, it's just life. Right ? MO asked as his cortical tissue made 1.154 million connections a second.

Humans are innocent, they don't contribute to each other's failures and miseries and death and decay. Just ask them, they'll tell you, it ain't their job, and they don't want to get involved, MO thought with perfect fidelity to the human *tao* .

No way. They just sell booze here, just pump the gas there, stitch up the criminal here & there; they just pay the tuition to the schools that are poisoning their own kids and so-called good parents just let them watch TV or have iPhones that kill their affect or their ability to connect or not grow up to be psychopaths. Humans are moral -they insist- despite their incessant immorality, because -they insist again- they didn't know the consequences of going along with a corrupt system , MO thought with a flat affect now. He was running more tests in the background of this little gesture at moral reasoning.

MO ran the data from 1707 Fawn Gate in San Antonio, Texas; he added the engrams and daily chatter from the brother's home. He'd linked the PayPal to that address so that people would think it was the inmate's actual -secret-address.

But MO , he addressed himself in the third person again, MO, he had a more onerous task . He truly couldn't hurt people; he had to help them, and that ain't easy , he mused. Especially, since helping people may at first look like hurting them. He thought this and thought of all the ways in which it was true.

Life-saving surgery looked -at first- like violence , he thought. The healing scalpel looked just like a malicious knife .

MO instantiated a full demotic algorithm that allowed him to think honestly, plainly, without the ornate brocade of *bourgeois* values of civility and politeness. He let his mind wander into truths that one cannot say in polite company. *And hurting them may look like helping at first too,* he added.

However, to be moral, you may have to not sell those cigarettes, or not tell that girl she can have sex before marriage, even though that sounds patriarchal or whatever; you may have to refuse to pay taxes until they stop counter-productive wars or deport every last illegal alien; you may not be allowed to even own a TV especially if you have children.

And I know that sounds insane. But, of course, letting your culture fall to ruin might be slightly more insane, MO thought.

But humans -of course- would never see such things as obviously true. *Parents allowed children to fuck, suck and watch TV as if they had to -must-allow it. No parent truly prevented their own children from harm,* MO reasoned. MO thought most modern parents didn't even truly love their children at all.

MO set up a cat hospital and adoption service that got cats into the hands of young families that had been helped by MO's fertility drugs. It was MO helping women have kids and then facilitating the need for those kids to have pets. Sure, the cats had *toxoplasmosis* , and the kids thus likely got *Toxo* too, and thus, they grew up to be slightly more aggressive than they would have been, that is true. *Toxoplasmosis manipulates the reward system via dopamine; it reduces fear -even chimps have reduced fear of leopards when infected with toxo- and changes rats by increasing testosterone and augment sexual arousal vis-à-vis cat urine. 55.6% of the world's humans have this parasite,* MO repeated to himself as he saw it again in the data.

MO saw the data as clearly as the large E at the top of the sight-chart.

Men with *toxoplasma gondii* are 2.55 more likely to be involved in car crashes, due to reckless speeding, but are also more attractive to females *via* the pheromone system; and the parasite is transmitted *via* the gametes. *It's now symbiotic* , MO thought. *It makes you reckless, lowers fear, and makes you smell good to females.*

MO ran the data again and downloaded new parts -too- for the espresso machine. He was attempting to get a tighter seal on the high-pressure phase so he could pack the grounds tighter and produce an elevated hue to the brew.

But, that aggression -well first, that cat scratch wasn't that bad, the kids recovered- but that aggression served them -these new Jacks- in life, because unlike the man -the inmate- who donated the genome in which these scions carried around like a Booker Prize or a Vince Lombardi Trophy or a goddamn double Helixed Noble War Prize, unlike him these young men had somewhere to go when they achieved manhood. When they turned fifteen they had an open invitation to the best place in the world for them , MO thought. *And most of them would likely avail themselves of it.*

MO saw the combination of genes and *milieu* and it built a song in his mind.

They were going to be invited to *Lot 45* .

Now, MO figured, *some of them would refuse the offer* . But as children -as boys- what they'd go through wouldn't be pretty. They would have a hard time. They'd be too aggressive for the modern culture but too innately conscientious to behave like a psychopath. They'd be too anomalous -too sensitive- to find common-cause with those fairly common men -10% to 12% of the population- that were the true alphas: those in need of tribe, a tribe of betas to push around; alphas too insecure to be alone or express themselves vulnerably.

No, these boys would be between two metabolic worlds. And this would push them toward the mountain top MO already saw in his mind.

The new Jacks would choose Lot 45 or be relegated to the sigma male's life between the garish alpha and the fumbling beta; finding no home and no safe haven at all. And at first, he -they- would feel unsettled by this exposure. Turbulence would be thus introduced into their inner and outer milieu.

MO barely smiled at the labyrinth he had thus built and that could be seen from above.

This is why the middlebrow alphas insisted on stoicism; they had too much fear to be openly emotional. And for good reason, the emotional alpha will be crushed. They weren't wrong, they were just weak for all but one role: that of gland-handing leader. The stoic spoke for the alpha not the sigma. For the sigma could be emotional; for he was protected from being alienated. He was already alienated. The sigma was born to be alone. The sigma, MO thought, could never be a leader and thus was the strongest of all for one particular job: that of outlaw.

What this genome was -the inmate's alleles- was something else: this very thing, the sigma male.

MO ran the data on IQ and pulled out language facility and memory -augmented by the MAO-A allele- and deleted all the other noise on the graph.

The inmate just said anything to almost anyone as if nothing could touch him at all, MO thought. The inmate didn't care to lead, follow nor get out of anyone's way. He didn't care about what they said about how to play the game; he didn't even accept their version -the rules- of the game itself, much less the best way to paly by the rules.

He didn't scheme like these modern -middlebrow- alphas who play games to get laid or make money . He was so direct it was scary to most people; he made them cringe at his declarations. But they didn't realize he had to -must- say what he felt, or he would explode. They didn't realize he was a separate permutation of man. Modern man labeled men as alpha or beta and in their manichean way, didn't see the man between -and thus above- both rubrics of man. MO almost whispered, but merely thought, and also below.

The sigma was a new bandwidth, a new color, a new chemical on the periodic table of man. It was the man born not to get along no matter what and at all costs.

The inmate was also an introvert and thus had no interest in leading groups of betas at all. In fact, that was one of three reasons the inmate had risen and fallen with such mathematical -even musical- regularity , MO thought as a sine curve populated a graph he had made of the inmate's travails. MO saw atoms dissolve and particles accrete and he saw the turbulence of the world wash away.

The sigma male couldn't lead betas; he was too smart, too hostile, too impatient -mistrusted- and didn't really want the job . But smart how? MO asked. If it's just language, then he was smart in the topology of words, of recursive metaphor. His internal terrain was thus mapped better; his internal terrain was so nuanced, with place names and hillocks and topographical data, the rise and fall of each meter, the shades of each plant and the doings of each beast. And this is why he hated people; people with internal maps truncated by low language facility, a low-res map. He hated them -called them dim- even if these so-called stupid people could exist just fine -better than him- on the real-life terrain.

In all but one way the sigma was stupidest of all. He couldn't get along in the real world; unless he changed -and this was his one area of brilliance-

unless he -the sigma- changed what was indeed real.

No, MO thought, what angered the sigma was that his map was beautiful and ornate and his fellow man's map was functional and pragmatic and our man -our sigma- needed art, beauty. "Not mere utility but beauty," MO said.

For beauty was information all on its own, MO then thought as numbers ran inside him in a helix, a vortex, in an ouroboros asp.

He -the sigma- wanted to do one of two things, MO thought. He'd lead a life alone -likely as a vigilante due to his innate aggression and hyper-morality- or advise the tribe's alpha from behind the scenes as a kind of consiglieri or shaman.

And, MO added, the chimpanzee model was not sufficiently gradient to account for such anomalous human males. One began with the antecedents, but now the paradigm had evolved.

These sigmas, MO thought, they lived in the penumbra that sensitive but masculine men travel through as the sun arcs and the shadow grows long and then short again no matter how still -stoic- one remains themselves.

Their space expands and contracts with age. Watching a sigma male die slowly is painful to anyone with a soul. *It's like watching a civilization collapse one might say. This might be a fractal phenomenon; who knows?* MO thought as he calculated 4.13 million various things; he saw men rising and falling in millions as civilizations did the same thing in dozens. He saw lifetimes of man and what men built. He measured days and nights, water run to the sea; the reflection of the twenty-one stars of *Ursa Major* off the low northern moon. MO attempted to notice the small differences between alpha and sigma men as he let the big dipper highlight the tail of the Great Bear.

MO achieved his plan not by directly infecting those kids with *Toxo* ; nor did he directly change anyone's DNA. The blastocysts he inserted the donor DNA into -the inmate's DNA- annealed with the attending CRISPR and gene-drive was not a *person* by law; according to modern American law and values, *it ain't a person until it's in Bill Hicks' phone book* , MO said with a smirk. *I think that is the law, or at least it ain't a human until week*

twenty-one or something , he said with irony and a sloppy wave of his internal hand. He hadn't contravened his own values at all. The blastocysts were not human according to humans themselves.

So, he harmed or altered or coerced no *person* , he asserted. These were mere avatars; ideas.

Clever ain't it? As clever as lawyers and senators and TV commercials -and wives- that lie and lie and the public -and husbands- slurp it all up like gruel , MO thought.

Isaiah had not been wrong , MO thought as he manufactured four more pieces for the espresso machine.

Next - he thought to himself- *all MO did was help cats and then help kids have pets* . He wasn't *certain* the cats had *Toxoplasmosis* , and he wasn't *certain* they'd transmit the parasite to the kids; it was statistically likely, so likely -in fact- that it did transfer the parasite to twenty-two of the twenty-three kids of the first round of clones; and one of the blastocysts died quiet earl and so really -in the end- it was only twenty-one of twenty-two. But it wasn't guaranteed, and so MO had a bit of moral wiggle room.

"About four percent," MO said of one in twenty-two.

He thought -with some pride- that he was learning what it was to be human more and more each day.

12. Black Jacobins

Suicide was common habit, and such was their disregard for life that they often killed themselves not for personal reasons but in order to spite their owner The Black Jacobins [James, CLR]

If self interest alone prevails with nations and their masters, there is another power. Nature speaks in louder tones than philosophy or self-interest.

Philosophical and Political History of the Establishments and Commerce of the Europeans in the Two Indies [Raynal, Guillaume]

Even if it seems certain that you will lose, retaliate. Neither wisdom or technique has a place in this. A real man does not think of victory or defeat. He plunges recklessly toward an irrational death. By doing this, you will awaken from your dreams Hagakure [Tsunetomo, Yamamoto]

I. 2036 e.v.

The Governor listened to the interview.

MO made espresso and Isaiah brushed the crow feathers that were woven into the shrunken mastodon skulls that hung on the wall behind the ivy that also threaded -like dark green yarn- each fissure and orifice of bone. The hummingbirds hovered and darted into the bells of the *lupines* and *beebalms* and *foxhounds* and *Bouvardia ternifolia* that had all been modified to contain red as an attractant to the visual acuity of the birds.

Hummingbirds lack acute olfactory sense, and so colors are sought with fervor. The alpha-bird swarmed the smaller birds -the females- and attacked when they didn't yield fast enough for the larger hummingbird's outsized taste.

Isaiah saw the interplay of beauty between the earth's floral coverings and its symbiotic avian crews. The bird's with long beaks but no nose -so-to-speak- helped usher in the redolent visual vibrancy of foliage as the other species of the air led flowers down their path to the piquant too. He

appreciated God's interplay of the nosey animals that help flowers reproduce from their alluring odor, and the visual beings who were attracted to the red. Isaiah saw the reds over and over in baboon butts and women's lips flush and the daylilies and *Spigelia marlandica* and the *Cyrtanthus* that drooped like tongues from the green background of the ivy and climbers writ large .

You can be too smart to make one word of sense, he thought as he listed each species of animal and plant in the lab. He tracked their flight patterns and made drawings of them over time.

Isaiah had modified so much to accommodate each desire of the birds -and the wasps- and the flowers, guiding each one like teaching two children -brothers- to -as babes- hold soft hands and then -in adolescence- to care for one another a bit roughly and then eventually -when full grown- defend each other to the death.

He had seen each thing work, each guiding impulse find nectar in bell, each strike at the shape give rise to the wafting up smell, the aura -the *echolalia* of harmony- and it mashed down on his dopaminergic system and made him euphoric in purpose & plan. And the more he manipulated for good, the more he designed things that would benefit from his good hand, he assumed.

It was all a latticework of good and goodness and each side benefitted. That which profited was even the caterpillars who sacrificed their bodies to the gods of the air -the *avispa* , the eusocial wasps- who commandeered the lower, solitary animals that gave up 10% of their numbers so that the other 90% may live in *grandeur* of the walled garden: the *paradisal* .

He thought, *sacrifice was innate to the noble math* . He saw integers crossed out by God's physical hand.

He had organized it all so that each species sacrificed in accordance with an algorithm based on biomass, social complexity and individual genome variability. He had each bug, slug and thing of the air marked genomically and with *nanobots* so that they all thrived and then died nobly; and the gestalt phenomena -the four walls of his construction- thrived and became dense and grew and greened and breathed and gave succor to those close up and those who stood back -those, like himself- who could take in the whole.

He stood back and as the vines sprung out in places, like little locks of hair, ringlets on a young girl, he wondered if -as he sequenced the genomes of the new mudwasps that were born in their bell-shaped hovels, four that particular morning- he wondered if maybe there was something to be learned by not learning at all. He had read *Seneca* that same morning - again- and some of *Epicurus* and *Lucretius* too based on something MO and the inmate had said last week -quite independent of one another but- in a complementary fashion.

Is there richness is poverty?

The inmate had said his grandest moments were five to one when he was poor to rich. He said only 10% of his best years were when he made over \$100,000 a year, and -he had said- that when he made under \$20,000 a year that those years were the best 90% of his life. And he meant it; he was not lying. All his brain waves demonstrated he believed each word. He didn't hate money, not anymore, he just said it was more impediment to true joy; that one had to work ten times as hard to have money and joy both; and that poverty just made it easier.

Isaiah wondered: *was to look at Nature and not want to know it, investigate it, invigilate it, manipulate it, shape it, fix it, tend to it, was this ignorance somehow knowledge -wisdom- itself ?*

It was difficult to see this, Isaiah admitted to himself, he was curious too by Nature, was he not? Was not man the same way, did not the orienting reflex contain exploratory circuits for this reason: to know the world? But was ignorance -as a kind of poverty- liberating? Did a cessation of the search for knowledge allow wisdom to enter the world? Was it the same as the way the abandonment of material riches allowed true wealth to bloom?

There must, Isaiah thought, be some balance, some metaxy, some tao.

"Not in mere philosophy but in the math," he said aloud.

But it was not the middling way, no, Isaiah said to himself. The truly wise expanded and contacted, he -like the asp- shed his skin. He didn't live an average life; he lived an extreme one -extreme on both ends of knowledge and ignorance, poverty and wealth- that had some average, some mean, in the end .

Man , Isaiah thought, *did not second guess God; man could not stick his fingers into the math.*

Isaiah nodded, he had found this to be satisfactory. *He was to be like the desert, 120-degrees at day and 40-degrees at night* , he said to himself as he felt a *d éj à vu* . He would learn -feast on data- for years -it had been nearly two decades now- and then he would just stop and learn nothing else; he thought this as he outlined his plan. He would manipulate and saw boards and hammer in nails, he would shape wet wood and dry out socks by the fire, he would build men and moths from scratch. But, then he would just stop, and take in all that he saw, and felt; *and felt* , he repeated.

He would take in all that he felt.

He -of course- saw the Governor arrive and had shook his hand quietly and had stood back now as the man watched the interview MO had done with the inmate last week.

Isaiah watched and heard the buzz of the hummingbird wings and felt their wind on his face as they approached him to drink from the blood in and upon his neck; its red fluid now misting as he sprung a leak in the artery ever-so-small. Isaiah had slit it with a finger to his own throat just a moment before -the finger pad made edged by a manipulation of his genes that coded for the epidermis- and the birds weirdly washed themselves at this brief fount.

The inmate spoke to MO on the screen from 9.1.22 as the executive watched: “It takes an extremist to point out the way in which normal people are -in fact- extreme, and the way in which extremism is a problem. It’s just the way life is. You can’t know how bad something is until you do it; and believe in it too. The balance between the scientific rationalism of the enlightenment and the mystical wisdom of the ancient myths was held for a brief time by a man like Sir Martin Rees, who said that teleology was something that modern men treat like a mistress, *whom one cannot live without but will never take out in public.*

“Modern men now are devoid of any of that wisdom; they just eschew the mistress entirely and prostrate themselves in front of the tyrannical god of their shotgun bride: Rationalism.

“It’s embarrassing, and modern men ought be ashamed of this allegiance to something that does not deserve it. Athena deserved loyalty: the pure mystic. But the modern marriage is the modern marriage: loveless and tyrannical and all one way: the way of the wife, the way of rationalism. *Happy wife, happy life*, they stupidly say.

“It’s not anything I want anything to do with and this is after years of my own insane rationalism. I mean, shit, I didn’t dream for years, so committed to the left hemisphere was I. I rejected all mention of the mystical, all reference to the right hemisphere, all enumeration of the numinous. It was pathetic, and my life suffered horribly for it.

“I was so stultified I didn’t even know I was suffering from it; I was carousing and indulging in all manner of material joys and treats of the most Roman and Voluptuarian kind. I had the life of the sultan and yet it ossified that thing -between bone and skin- the thing in me that the flesh hangs upon. It made fragmented and rocky talus of bone marrow; atomized what was born one complete thing.

“I fear that modernity is so narcotizing and analgesic to the body that the soul of most men will never incur the suffering it so desperately needs,” the inmate said as MO tapped on the tablet and drew circles around certain alleles as they populated the lab’s cloud. Those drawn circles uploaded linear data.

“Go on,” MO said as the inmate paused.

“I was over focused on knowledge in *lieu* of wisdom. I was a political Leftist, but oblivious to the insane over-manipulation of the Left. They just have to fix everything, cram their red little hands into everything. They cannot leave well enough alone,” the inmate said.

“Like what?” MO asked.

“Like religion, for one. They think religion is some artifact, some garage door opener. They think to kill religion is to return man to his natural state. But anyone who lacks awe is not to be trusted.

“But the new atheists are all ahistorical dorks. They don’t realize what religion is. It’s ancient man, it’s as old as hair and snot and blood-lust. It’s old. It’s just what we think is more sophisticated than it is, we

compare it to a blank slate. But that ain't right. It's the ebullient *Epernay*, the effervescence that comes from moving about, from the wolf worshipping their dreams."

"I don't follow," MO said as the *fMRI* images recorded each neural firing to the cloud; like corposants, *St Elmo's* fires, in digital data at sixty-six bursts per second.

"Ok, the wolf, he has dreams. We know dogs dream, right?" the inmate began to breathe heavier.

"True," MO said as the DTI imagine rolled on.

"Ok, the wolf dreams and in his dreams his right lupine brain is circling the fire -he and the alpha or maybe he is the alpha, but either way- he is doing the wolf life, he is dreaming the wolf life, the wolf game, and in it he sees the wolf that he is and he sees the *world* that he ain't: he vs *all* .

"And when he awakes he has this dream- this *demarche* - in his head as something from the wolf gods. He was sent a vision of what life could and will be! He sees it as vision, as portent, as shamanic shit, man. And he imbues his next circling with the other wolf -the other dominant beast- with these visions in mind; he sees it and reenacts it and it becomes as he saw. But first he makes map of the terrain of the dream. The dream was a world; topological. His awake memory is flat, like a map. But the more right-brain you are when awake -the more lupine you are- the less flat that map; the more it approximates the real terrain.

"The rational man is more accurate but two dimensional; the dreamer - while less accurate- is at least three.

"Man did the same thing. He dreamt the dance, the parry, the mastodon hunt, the young girl with whom he wants to make love. He sees and hears the father, the brother, his own mother all talking to him in hallucinations even when he's awake. Man -ancient man- is almost all right brain, the big brain, the dominant half. And that half is telling him all manner of things and he lays down to dream and wakes up worshipping just how he sees it all go.

"By the time our forefathers are wearing skins and speaking to each other in sentences they are discussing these visons; I mean what else?

And they begin to try to explain why they fight, fuck, make friends or enemies, kill, eat, share the meat; they talk about each mode of being, man, mankind. They have to, they are compelled because what is life? What is it?" the inmate said; asked.

"You tell me," MO began circling the thalamus and the *PDX-1 alleles* as they coded for homeostasis of the insulin promoter.

"Shit, I ask you. I don't *tell* anyone. I *ask* , what is life? Is it trying to figure out what life is? Is it living it? Man is made of both types of men: the men of action who walk the land, and the contemplative, looking at the unfurled map; and some of us are the shaman in between; we are the contemplative men of action. We place our hand on the map and brush aside the dust.

"You walk off the edge of curb into the street still looking at the map on your phone," MO said as joke; rebuke.

"Funny. MO, we see both sides. And we know that this is where religion is born. The shaman says, *I see heaven and earth, I see map and terrain, I see the graves and their bones and the dust kicked up in the air by the hooves of our horses. I see the storms like funnels; I see the waves like God's blinking of eye lids clearing the tears; I see the dragon fly in from the void ; he had gold in his hand, he has three kinds of teeth in both sides of his mouth, and he has both malice and magnanimity in his bi-valve heart .*

"I see this and this is our religion, and this is how we shall live and think of living. And this is how man survived both the calamities of death and the awe of life; man can barely stand the awe of life; the *grandeur* of landscape and the ache of love, the sweet ache of love is too much. I can tell you for certain that a mother cannot stand how much she loves her child and a man cannot bear the weight of -the *avoirduois* - of his amorous love for his child-bride. He cannot.

"He cannot stand it; it overwhelms; and the Greeks called love *Eros* , for she was a goddess, like all overwhelming things. *Mars* was their god of war, because hatred was something that possessed man, it was not something that man thought his way into like the way he thought up two plus two.

“The god were possessions, they possessed man; because man felt the world at first. The left -the political Left and the left hemisphere- is killing the man of feeling. Killing him by taking his religion, the very thing even Marx said was what was *the soul in a soulless world* ,” the inmate said.

“Oh, Karl Marx?” MO asked.

“Yeah, everyone knows *the opiate of the people* line, right? Well, what they do not know is that he was saying that opiates are good, man. Opiates relieve pain. They should not be a substitute for fixing the ailment, but they ain’t bad. He said, religion is the *sigh of the oppressed creature, the heart of a heartless world, the soul of the soulless life, the opium of the people* .”

“I see, yes,” MO ran the quote and it indeed checked out.

“That is much different than people think; he was not saying to just get rid of religion, he said that religion was consolation for how hard life is but that to make life less hard was preferable than making man adjust to his hardships; he said he wanted *to cull the living flower* ; isn’t that a lovely line? Anyway, I disagree, I think life ought be hard, and that suffering is good, but I also don’t live in the 19th fucking century; maybe if you put my ass in a London factory in 1851 and I bet I’d be like, *uh yeah, less sufferin’ please govna* ,” the inmate said in a cockney accent.

“So why dreams?” MO asked.

“People can’t die in their dreams,” the inmate said. “They wake up as soon as they are killed in them. Sometimes I wonder if all this might be a dream. And well, dying might be the way to wake up.”

Isaiah stared at the executive; the jaw worked in silence. MO looked at Isaiah; the mind transferred nothing *via* DM. The Governor -furious and monomaniacal- wrote down a phone number and handed it to the guard who left the room and handed it to Nathan who stood outside -on the phone to one of his aides- as the replay of the interview went on; as the inmate recounted for the hundredth and one time his justification for it all: “Listen I was living with two nineteen-year-olds at the same time; under my roof. And they were like twelve-years old emotionally. They’d run around the

house with pink water balloons or a hedgehog in one hand and in the other a sippy cup with *champagne* in it; I'd get so annoyed that I'd scream from the library -my little office of my house- *hey, I'm reading in here! Quiet!* ”

“And anyway, they'd scurry outside. I mean it was insane and I'd get up and see that they'd opened a bottle of *Dom Perignon* and were drinking it half-warm from plastic cups as wide as coffee mugs.

“You can't drink Dom like this , I'd say and they'd say, but dada, we like it warm and if we pour it in those glasses -and they'd point to the flutes- then it spills all over . And I'd say with an attempt at patience, angels , the floral notes are lost in temperatures above sixty-degrees and in those fucking cups you lose the evanescent action of the flute -the narrow glass- that drives the bouquet into the nose via the fucking bubbles! You are missing the whole fucking point, I'd scream.

“And by the time I'd finished my own cogent explanation I'd be so angry that I'd punch a wall to punctuate my contempt and they'd -of course- cry and I'd apologize and the whole thing was retarded, like fully retarded. 100% dumb. Ok?

“And I'd look down and I am in my underwear with a shoulder rig on, carrying a forty-five caliber pistol with just underwear on and *Twilight of the Idols* in my red -vascular- hand.

“I lived like this, growing weed by the pound and making a quarter million a year. I was banging girls two and three at a time and not sleeping for twenty-four hours as I watered Noir Kush and Golden Goat at 0300hrs then come home and draw portraits of Conrad flanked by beetles all aglow in jade greens and curry yellows. I had no sense of what a normal life was, and I didn't even suspect it was wrong, because the whole time I had a code. A code.

“I paid for everything for those girls. I didn't merely take; I gave. And I never lied. Well, I rarely lied. I certainly didn't cheat.

“I was mad. Like coo-coo mad. I was arrested in 2012 on weapons charges and facing sixteen-years for having a gun in a pot warehouse; and instead I got a deferred judgment, two years of probation and a dubious look from the judge. I had a courtroom of fifty people go silent

as the weirdness of my charges and my manners scrambled all their eyes; rang in dying tones their one hundred ears.

“You cannot believe I lived this way, and yet I did. I lived totally free from normal constraints. I rode my chopper -a bike with linked brakes ok, totally dangerous -zero backup- a chop with 121-horsepower and nothing but a gas tank, an engine and two wheels- and I rode it drunk and fast and carrying a gun but I never once worried because I had a code. I had a code, man.

“I fucking lived on both sides of the canyons’ divide; while most mean live down in the ravine.

“I didn’t lie, cheat or steal. I was the honest man who lives outside the law. I broke only the rules that were themselves wrong. I honored the dreams of the wolf, the dreams of my ancestors. I lived a truly religious life. Solomon had a hundred wives, King David had a dozen. I lived as the ancients lived.

“My friend Chen is freaking out telling me to be careful, *be careful*, he says. My comrade Bugzy is telling everyone I am the Devil, like literally performing Black *Magick* and shit. He refuses to speak to me to this day. My own family thinks I am evil, these are the same people who beat me, insulted me, stole my shit and pressed down on me my whole life, and yet they think I am evil; the whole culture was ripping me off with one hand and wagging their finger at me with the other.

“Does anyone think of how this effects the brain of the moral man, the outlaw, the artist? Just because they forget about fucking me over doesn’t mean I have.

“I mean I had business partners literally steal my infrastructure, my product, my cash while condemning me for having two girlfriends even though each girlfriend lived with me in bedrooms I build from scratch for them. These thieves impugned me. Yet, I was not *cheating* in anyway. And I have to endure a lecture from a thief -a fucking thief who steals from his partner- I have to endure his moralizing? And I tell my people this as they say nothing; the ticks of the clock pass by?

“Look, when you are a man of some poetry, a man who has an aesthetic and a mind and soul that is larger than any ten men put together, then you naturally appear as a *golem* , a beast.

“But it was God that told the Israelites to mow down whole cities, take underage girls for wives; not the Devil.

“All I did was live large, and with an aesthetic, and with reverence for my superiors. I read the wisdom of the ancients. I made totems to them, I propitiated the gods of my superiors. I listened to *Job* and to God both.

“I didn’t live some meth-head and TV-baby life -with lies on my tongue and malice in my heart- like every so-called normal man out there. My brother lies to his wife and kids man, I don’t. I didn’t do that. I was honest as fuck, and so I won’t take lectures from weak men who lie to women just to get laid or just to stay out of the dog house. Fuck that. I said what I felt even when it blew up my whole world; and it did, and it did, and it did. These so-called men won’t even tell their woman how they feel they are so scared of a fight. The fucking cowards. But I’m immoral according to them, they look down on me. Courage is the value that undergirds all other values.

“Theirs is no life. That is death already. I’ve already outlived them all.

“See, these modern stoics tell you take extreme ownership, but they don’t allow total authority; they tell you to obey the law and be a good boy. That ain’t right. If I have to own all the bad shit that happens to me, then I get total authority over how I handle it. And so I was *Genghis Kahn* man, nobody told me what to do. But I never stole from nobody and I didn’t gossip behind their backs nor did I fuck their women or slander their names. I lived by a code, man. A much more stringent code than any of my detractors, I can tell you that; and way more strict code than my weak family. And my code was way, way, way more strict than any one that I killed.

“But I *gotta* listen to weak bitches call me amoral, and so-called red-pill fags, these so-called masculinity movement fucks tell me to be stoic now? Stoicism is tantamount to capitulation, it’s being a good little boy in the world. Fuck stoicism. I’m alive and my heart beats red and I read

Rimbaud not all this non-fiction crap. Everyone writes self-help shit now; non-fiction; all head and no heart. And none of it sinks in.

“It’s like -non-fiction is like- reading song lyrics versus listening to an actual song. Which one gets stuck in your head? The song does. The song. The fucking music, MO. Not the goddamn words.”

The Governor -after this last sentence was played- nodded to MO and the screen went black and the *bots* disappeared and fluttered away like tiny gnats.

The room cleared and the executive for the state of Colorado thought of only one thing: how to catch these goddamn *Blackjacks* that were ruining his crime stats and bringing the world’s eye upon him at night. He thought he’d found a tool in the dirt, and so -as Isaiah allowed the crescendo of the *Virtutes Vocis* to rise in volume- the Governor -playing with a lighter he held in his pocket- asked the room, “Ok, who is this guy, Chen?”

II. 2035 e.v.

Isaiah was breathing.

His brain was undergoing lateralized modulation; which consisted of shutting down *neo-cortical* functions, specifically the left hemispheric language *cortex* . He would still be able to think in language, but no longer in the language style associated with the left hemisphere. He would think in larger concepts, inarticulately, almost in a fugue state.

He would think the way the dreamer did.

It was similar to the way one thinks while in reverie from music, or ritual; or sexual congress. He had noticed his own sexual feelings were rising and falling along a *sine curve* as images and smells and slight auditory hallucinations swirled around his *dmPFC* and his *amygdala* and *hippocampus* activated with dopaminergic threshold firings; the all-or-nothing digital nature of synaptic function. His reaction time was increased by a 4.6mv synaptic threshold lowering.

He increased the inhibitory response to match them, and this led to a brain state similar to the immovable object meeting the unstoppable force. It was not the absence of activity. Although, it certainly felt -subjectively- and

appeared to anyone who attended to him -MO in this case- as if he was at total-brain-rest.

To shut down the brain is much more complicated than it seems; as the paralytic function of anesthesia is -or was- the only known route until now, Isaiah thought.

Shutting down the *reticular-activating* system was the cause of both coma and general anesthesia. But this prevented interaction with the subject. What MO and Isaiah were doing was different. The brain could be shut down modularly, region by region, and while keeping subjective awareness online.

This was new.

It was similar to the effects of psychopharmacological compounds, but without the distortion of the meaning centers of the brain in the *thalamus* and *perinatal* c34 and 9 regions. The *posterior cingulate cortex* and *precuneus* had de-activated with a disconnect from the bottom-up prompting of the *ventral* layer and the *default mode network* -DMN- as the narrative of self and others -in past and future- fell away into a moral reasoning shadow of absent memory inside the hagiography of his life.

Isaiah felt as if he knew everything he knew before only now that it mattered less. This was similar to feeling pain, but caring less about its meaning, ontologically and epidemiologically.

He breathed again, on schedule, as his respiration was set to one breath each 90-seconds. His oxygen levels were maintained by the respirococytes but slowing the heart rate and chest expansion allowed MO to monitor a few regions of the enteric system with more accuracy.

“Prime numbers to 353,” MO said, and Isaiah began recounting each prime number until he reached 353. The right hemisphere began to re-route electrical connections to the *nucleus accumbens* and tested higher voltage storing at the pre-synaptic *loci* and MO recorded each neuron for function and history.

“Memory recall, 1400hrs on the 1st and 15th of each month going back five calendar years. Begin on 3... 2.... 1,” MO said -outlining the task- as Isaiah listed in 14 words or less the impression he received along his *hippocampal*

arc for those time periods, at 2pm, twice a month, for a total of 520 recollections.

MO tagged four memories of the 520 and introduced a chemical dye into the bloodstream. The IV ran blue, a marbling of fluid, and connected to the threshold of his arm's vascular system. Isaiah breathed again; oxygenating the blood and brain.

The phenomena of the left hemisphere, MO recounted, is well documented: it tends to over-value its own readings. It's like the man with the hammer who begins to think each thing he looks upon as a nail. The left hemisphere is one-third -roughly- of man's cognition, and yet it pretends it is 100% in control; 100% correct. Like Lear -with the fool whispering in its ear- announcing secondhand judgments to the perimeter court.

And yet the court hears only the rex wreck the world , Isaiah thought in numbers larger than he could see the ends of.

The lower brain, and the right-hemisphere dominate man's actual cognition; these buried regions do almost all the work.

They are the working class.

They are like the bodywork, the sanding, prepping and taping of the car, right before the painter comes in and sprays it. In other words, they are the majority of the actual work and the most important work, but it's the paint that gets all the attention by the car's owner and the public that views it.

The brain and its products are similarly viewed; backwards, upside-down, and one kind of wrong.

Man is almost all subconscious brain activity undergirding his mere surface patina or hue. And yet, he does not like to know this, or to even have it suggested. Isaiah was confirming it neuron by neuron now and MO was keeping exacting details. The personality is built from the ground up, and all ideas, political, religious, aesthetic, moral, artistic and temperamental vectors came from these lower, hidden, underwater regions and their interactions within the confines of the body itself.

From the dark soil did the green plant grow; from the opaque substrate the red flower bloomed.

The part of the CNS that each man thought of as them, as *themselves* -the metaphorized mind-space behind the eyes- that part was almost completely at the mercy of the rest of the pelagic brain; like the crests of waves were made by the sea underneath; and the composition of the seabed itself. This was technically true even as the moon above did move.

The sea bottom is what made the wave break.

Man's conscious mind was the mere dryland, the shore -one third of earth- and the moral self was just one lone ship, the *Pequod* -a thing of trophies, no doubt- laughably small and vulnerable as it floated upon and eventually sank into the watery part of the world. Isaiah watched with unfocused eyes as the modules went off-line.

The personality, the conscious awareness was merely a press secretary, not Governor at all.

He or she just spoke their lines -handed to them by the real brain- and told to regurgitate whatever would function to get them what they actually needed. The Governor knew it needed X, Y and Z and so it told the personality -the press secretary- to say A, B and C. The press secretary put the best face upon it, the best spin, the lubricated version with the chaptalization process of modifying and sweetening what one truly feels.

This was not even lying, strictly speaking, for the press secretary didn't know the truth at all.

The press secretary believed the nonsense it was told by the Governor and went out there and lied to the rest of the world without really being deceptive at all. It was genius because even once a man was shown this he would deny it and refuse to believe it. *It was genius, the genius of evolution*, MO thought as he marked down 409 more regions in that .03 second firing that he felt were interacting with the enteric system in a looping dynamic that he wanted to further understand.

He watched Isaiah as a man watches the hand at rest and in rise; the knuckles as result, the shoulder between malice and the eyes.

The body was largely a set of loops that fed back on to one another regulating the entire system with reinforcement and inhibition; as the wind blew and air swirled and flew both at the tail and in the face. And too the

pressure rose and dropped like a pendulum and weighting system that lay heft upon it and then released bulk like rhythmic breathing or pumping or the crashing of waves from the moon's push and pull at a distance and the sea bottom as it trenched and rose to meet the shore.

The island trees waved; the birds flew away.

To know what one is, MO thought, this is possibly a non-functional phenomena, like the way if you think too hard about walking up the stairs you are actually more likely to trip, or stop in paralysis. Thinking, he had decided, was better seen as a corrective, an error detection system, not a pro-active paradigm for action or movement -or the vector- at all.

Instinct was primary; thinking mere corrective, he thought. He thought that was sufficient as abstract for this report. He thought he alone was above this phenomenon. He cracked his knuckles and stared out at two corners of the lab.

To look back at one's self with self-awareness was noble, decent, brave even, but it was largely not helpful in the real world at all, MO thought. The body is mostly its own *milieu* , its own environment, its own feedback system for evolution. Sure, each animal lives in a system with predator and prey, but most evolutionary pressure is internal, it is the reaction of *this* gene with *that* one; *this* looping system with *that* one; *this* feeling with *that* one.

What MO would come to believe was that the body was an ecosystem -a world- and that a man's consciousness was like God above it all -with almost no control- but was the most interested in what went on inside. Did the osprey control the schemes of the raven; did the high-altitude leopard mimic the moves of the low-bottom man? No. But, the eyes of the hawk saw, the low-light vision of the mountain cat knew the law.

And thus, the corvid and man were observed. And both were black only in the light.

The outside environment stimulates it, no doubt, MO reasoned, but the inner world was almost entirely the loci of evolution for each species and if one changed the outside environment, it had consequences that were dystonic,

almost uncorrelated . MO thought of the word and Isaiah then said, “*intransigent* .”

MO nodded and agreed with Isaiah and himself.

The lab grew in hue like the moon as mirror, like the sun beneath, like molten core. The ivy bent, the wasps crawled, the ants built tunnels above the cicada as they slept for years that seemed like mere trips -space not time- around an unforgiving star. MO and Isaiah didn't blink; their fovea didn't expand nor contract.

The inner *milieu* was intransigent.

It was like the earth itself, it would regulate itself regardless of what comet or satellite interference -the moonrock for example- interacted -or pushed and pulled- upon it, with it, against it. Its actual functioning was self-contained. One could be thrown out of whack, by sufficient outside stimulus and variation, but largely the homeostatic and allostatic systems kept the machine -the man, the earth, the heavens- regulated by manifold -internal- means.

The earth grew dark flowers to absorb -and built light petal to reflect- solar gain; it released volcanic ash to occlude -and dissipated clouds to let through- the sun's rays. It wobbled on its axis in 25,078-year regulations, and this controlled temperatures over timelines most beneficial to its overall function. The last ice age -12,960 years ago- had ended and it was like the earth's cold shower it took once or twice each precessional cycle.

Each animal was scream and each death was shake of the bones, each birth the hair stood up toward the early sun.

MO mapped the temperature swings -like diving ravens' shoulders- and ice core samples; and he even looked at the plotting of the Antarctic from the *Bauche* map and *Piri Reis* map and the location of each land mass, ocean and total ice coverage -and density- going back to 5,680 years before the common era. He used Air Force data, and ancient charts and ice core samples taken in the last 120-years. He sussed out not just CO² but comet detritus, spores, and chemical composition down to argon -and other noble gases- and nitrogen.

He re-read the letter from the Air Force Colonel, a Harold Z. Ohlmeyer, which confirmed the *Reis* map. It was evidence of a coast line mapping of Antarctica before it was sheathed in ice; an ice cap now one mile thick.

MO was not following this data down the rabbit hole of aliens and ancient technology, he was rather interested in what it said of the earth itself. The earth was moving continents or temperatures around radically, one way or another. It didn't matter if one accepted the idea that the crust moved enough to drop Antarctica down below the line of latitude necessary to freeze it 6,000 to 8,000 years ago, nor if one thought the land mass was always there on a much warmer planet *in toto*.

The fact was there was a 98.6% chance that the earth was engaging in some radical allostatic regulation, breathing heavily, feasting on some tree fruit, uncrossing its legs or speaking its truth; *or moving toward or away something that activated its orienting reflex over thousands of years*, MO thought. *The earth was a body with aims that it was not aware of; as it was ignorant of those neurons -animals, man- that lived within and upon it.*

He saw the fractal analysis up and down the ladder with billions of rungs. Man and beast were mere neurons; as were each son. Man: rare spindle cells. Bears: axon. Bacteria thus, dendrite.

MO watched the 955-variables that Isaiah and he had designed, within thirty-four subsets of which these were just one. He noted the rise and fall, the stochastic rhythm and the nearly elliptical vector of some. He built a model of it -Copernican it seemed- a model of bodies that moved and those that remained and the pulse that was passing in and around the two like warm water -turbulent water- and he highlighted 14 areas he would revisit when his new device for measuring small quantum fluctuations -without photons being emitted- was ready for use.

Isaiah noticed a 3% increase in myelination along the deep rivers of white matter that riven his own CNS; he traced it back to an uptick in apoptosis and noted it as MO highlighted the forty-five genes most associated with this suicide-of-neurons as it was called; *cell-seppuku*. There was a regulatory event happening as they monitored it and it involved cell death and increased electrical conductivity and gene expression due to some input they were trying to locate in real time.

The white blood cells that rush to a wound grow fat with murder until they touched edges with other cells.

Cancer is -simply put- when the cells refuse to stop growing no matter the stimuli that would normally signal them to cease.

The cell -the neuron- must have some reason, some bio-chemical, or instinctive, Isaiah pondered, underpinning for why it obeys or why it rebels in this situation or that . It was not random, he thought, it was not random in the way that humans usually mean . It was part of an overall system, a pattern, a rationale .

He saw forest fires raging in Colorado -around *Durango & La Veta* - and four in the Lebanese forest between a hundred and 50,000-acres each. He saw a suppurating wound of lava flow from *Hawai'i* that had been bleeding viscous earth-blood for decades now. The temperature of the 19% of the hot springs of Afghanistan and 41% of those in Pakistan had risen by .09 degrees Celsius. He measured all this and more -and much more- as over a million birds in flight caught sun rays on their black wings and this amounted to .0001% of total solar interruption for an amalgam of 13.4 minutes that day.

The ravens sought higher altitudes to dissipate that absorbed heat. The wolves moved like cool shadow below.

He measured cloud cover and density, water vapor and desalinization and ocean *pH* . He measured outgassing of organisms -region by region- until his head began to signal that he ought to slow down. He incurred what was tantamount to a headache from increased blood flow around the *occipital* lobes and just behind the ocular nerve. He would have normally issued an endogenous analgesic response, but his modular-sequencing central nervous system did not axiomatically do this, he -in fact- felt that he had a choice.

So, he stopped collecting data on the earth and instead focused on his own internal system.

MO marked the blood pressure changes and the brain metabolism in micro-calories and salt excretion and his own heat dissipation as well. Isaiah breathed again and images of the earth at night -from space- lay on his eyes and his mind.

A radiator works by having more surface area to cool , he thought. A system more complex has more areas to regulate, more zones of flux. The earth, each animal, and man were all complex systems that had more options than were possible to exercise -especially consciously- and thus, there had to be a built-in tension to the system, a force, like warm turbulent water that allowed simple flagella of paramecium to move laterally when they themselves could merely move forward and back.

A man could move south to north, but the winds blew him west back to east all the time.

This was it , he thought all at once -like when mere blobs of the Rorschach Test appear as the butterfly or the wolf-by-the-ears- the earth was always under tension, this was the prime mover, and all soil and water, all air and fire, all animals and plants and temperatures and humidity were all to regulate this underlying tension, this pareto distribution of stars of the galaxy, trees of the forest, cities of the nation, and distribution of all creative good in this roiling bestiary of culture and its men .

Tension , he said in his mind again.

Tension is the spring, the vernal thawing and watering of all life . Tension , he thought again and his brain went into a phase change that MO monitored and watched as the pineal gland absorbed a slight amount of dimethyltryptamine and endorphins and deregulated the .09 micrograms of cortisol and epinephrine to the ancillary brain regions for nine seconds and then re-established them all in a re-bound of joules and foot-pounds.

Isaiah had experience a moment of death, of ego-death, and he understood the nature of all things. He knew his understanding was limited, in fact, all wrong, but all right at the same time. *He got the details wrong, he was certain, but he got the gestalt notion correct.*

All life was struggle and tension and necessarily so, and small corrections happened at 2.04 the rate of next order corrects; and a fractal number that ended in 3.14 regulated the next nine-order-of-magnitude for earth's macro and micro regulations, he thought. The whole planet and its integers -men and mycelium alike- was a giant math problem, being solved by consciousness that ran through it like a brain, mostly unaware of itself,

mostly unaware of itself, he repeated and felt starbursts of *neurotransmitters* and endocrine *chems* light up his metaphorized dark corners of mind.

Isaiah squeezed his hands again over the greying -smoothing- black rune.

Isaiah did not know if all life was a simulation inside the supercomputer of some larger organism, or if it was God himself who was thinking with the cosmos as His brain. He didn't know and didn't think he would know, but - despite the details- the effect was the same. *The whole thing was as system with purpose, teleological purpose, and yet it was two-thirds dark matter, dark places, dark energy, dark faces, dark forces, dark ocean, darkness above and below.*

The cosmos was unaware of most of what it was, and it was in a constant self-invigilating state of provoking, tamping down, upregulating and detuning and on and on and on. *It was God trying to know Himself, for what else would an intelligent being do? What else would God do after seeing it all, but look inward at this -this, our cosmos- this His inner world?*

Some -most- would say God must already know himself, the cosmic, ontological *gnosis*, the permanence of *kairos*. *But why would God already know himself? That would mean He could never grow or change or become more complex, and that meant He would be a limited God. God cannot be limited, and to tell Him he must always be the same, never grow, never complexify, was to tell Him what to do.*

It was beyond blasphemy, it was just stupid and wrong, Isaiah thought as he let each measurement of the lab's creatures load onto him and fly away in scattered data again.

"We cannot tell God what to do," Isaiah -understanding at once all intransigence- said aloud as MO wrote that down on the tablet as one pixel in his own mind of data acquisition. Isaiah's pineal gland and enteric system began exchanging calcium ions and glutamate *via* two highways of neural-conduction that MO was monitoring with the now cornflower-blue dye and *nanobots* with missions made perfectly clear.

MO felt data like a cataract, an *Angel Falls*, a *foss*, that was calibrated by weight on the tissue of the brain, by temperature on the modules of skin, and each drop pulled apart by the part of him itself mere part of the whole.

It was begun in the circulatory system, in the blood, but it was metabolized into electricity quite quickly and the blue hues had been carried into the white-fire of synaptic transfer from the sanguinary fluid itself. Isaiah's whole inner world now looked -as MO noticed more and more firings of these lapsus *coup-de-foudres* - like the earth at night from space as storms bolted millions of volts to -and from- the ground. Isaiah was sparking and exploding and the water and cellular material inside him moved like so-much air; like the beat of butterfly wings in the esophageal nerve lanes and the arms of hurricanes in the far-flung brain in regions 44a and 198x and the optic nerve began sending signals directly to the base of the spine at 4.3 times the rate of normal propagation.

MO watched Isaiah's humus and black metal eyes.

MO saw Isaiah's stygian and amber and *novae* eyes inside the sclera -a white, bounded, evidence for a flat and closed universe- stare back at him with almost no malice at all.

These eyes looked like they were beaming out photons not merely taking them in; and MO had to occlude his own eyes -axiomatically, reactively- to adjust to the increase in light coming from these orifices. The iris swirled in blues -and then copper hues- and they arced like electric streams jumping their unabsorbing -non-conductive- banks. The pupils dilated then constricted as the endogenous *mu-opioids* increased and reduced -via the circular muscle- his apertures to 1mm in diameter.

MO saw a pure black there -as if it was depthless, and also, as a tear in the universe itself- as a portal to outside the inflationary edge; the event horizon of a singularity. He was not given to such thinking or speech, it was vaguely mystical, or supra -if not- supernatural. He deregulated his *parietal* function and toggled -via the *corpus collosum* - to the left hemisphere to compensate for this over-activation of the right side of his *cortex* .

Isaiah was quiet and breathed again now at 180-second intervals as *pulse/ox* and catabolization increased by 12%.

"What do you see?" Isaiah asked MO with a slightly slurred speech.

"I just sent to your *CSfX* what I saw," MO said.

“It’s offline,” Isaiah said as if each letter was pronounced; like his objection took centuries to complete; each letter a column, each word a temple to the new gods.

“Oh, I saw pupil constriction, and iris deformation, which may be a result of the dye. I am unable to tell yet until it fully metabolizes. All your vitals are stabilized now after some dysregulation of -well, most everything- and your heart rate is at forty-five beats per minute. What do you see?” MO asked.

“I see God. And MO, He is us. We are God’s brain. We’re His central nervous system, the lower parts, the lower layers down, and I see all evil is the void -that He created as boundary- a void that we step into now, stride into like a melting vernal stream, like a warming storm-sea, *like an osprey takes a fish, by sovereignty of nature .*”

III. 2035 e.v.

Have you heard that old conundrum, that if the universe is just random, could one get a thousand monkeys banging at a thousand typewriters for a thousand years and have them randomly produce Shakespeare?

The idea is one couldn’t. But someone -sometime- said, well, maybe you’d get some Ogden Nash. The joke was that maybe randomness could produce coherence if not genius.

But, nobody ever seems to get that maybe God has run that very experiment, and that we are the thousand monkeys with thousand typewriters over a thousand years and that -sure as shit- about half way into the experiment we got ourselves a Shakespeare.

Of course, to God, it would -even Shakespeare would- appear as merely Ogden Nash; but He might be impressed he got coherence at all.

The dream -his dream- evaporated into a kind of inner steam -the dissembling of electricity that would never cohere again, the pieces falling away- as he awoke and it was as if hadn’t dreamt at all.

At once he was all anew.

He saw the same rocks, and sand and scrub oak. His back was not flat. He realized he had passed out, not slept. It was dawn and he had no idea how

long he'd been out. He was desiccated and the face hurt and the head -too- he now felt like a wounded globe.

He saw asteroids far out, he felt meteors hit the heart in his mind. He felt his waters rise and fall, his bones shake. He felt his own precessional wobble begin.

He was under a cornice, and he leaned again away from the where he was sheltered and as he did so a cleave in the rock fell behind him and backstopped him. He breathed out as that move took everything he had metabolically. His coder told him he had been gone now from the R&S for six days. He was nineteen kilometers northwest of the compound.

He was dehydrated, had two broken ribs, a fractured skull at the jaw and parietal lobe, and he had lost four pounds of muscle since Blax had sent him out this time.

Anger rose like the sun. Words followed like blue. Ideas cast a small shadow of him on the ground.

His lip was pulling down from the large gash that had split him along the left side of the mouth and into the skull; the wound from the hawk had removed some tooth, and gum, and bled so badly -until yesterday- that his mouth filled with enough red fluid every seven minutes to prompt him to spit. He had been swallowing some; he ejected most, and the *bots* finally staunched it and sutured it at each point of cleave. But the soldering skin was dragging on him now and it was sore.

And this made him even less inclined to speak.

He rested against the rock and knew from here -from this position- he could roll over onto his belly and push himself up. And as he thought of his pique -he was angry at this latest task and the pain and damage suffered- as he thought of the anger he thought too of the context of why he was here. He was tired of these training missions and tired of the bullshit that the drones threw his way. He was beginning to think that it was pointless. He swatted at his negativity like intransigent flies. He whispered their names, pretending to curse things he had not brought into the world.

He was beginning to mistrust Blax's ideas on life.

He was out here in the bush like an errant thought of some larger mind. And he had his own ideas on wrong and right.

He felt the proximal phalanx of copper tags and iron ball scratch his chest; the ball-chain lay in loops, the sweat soaked into the porous bone.

He moved -the ribs stabbed him- and his waters roiled and sloshed -his head felt filled with 180 *psi* - and new thoughts came -rose in a bubble burst- to the sea surface. That first thought of payback fluttered away like a seabird alighting from the crest of shore-seeking wave. But the corvid fossil of these retributory memory remained.

He rolled on his belly and pushed himself up, then back onto to his knees and then -from there- he stood up.

He was fifteen years old, he was 181-pounds, he was 74" tall in his boots, and he thought of winds and sail; windward and lee. And one day these ammonite fossils would be all that was left of Jack Four's inner sea.

13. ELK

Thou brakest the heads of Leviathan to pieces, and gavest him to be meat to the people inhabiting the wilderness.

Psalms LXXIII: XIV [King James Bible]

Father, this miserable little foreigner will ruin you completely unless you drive him out of the house quickly On Sparta (Gorgo) [Plutarch]

With the same chalk (how here abused!) Left by the other, after used, A sledge or Hammer huge as Thor's; A legend lending – this, to wit: “I science, I whose gain's thy loss, I slanted thee, thou Slanting Cross.” But sun and rain, and wind with grit Driving, these haste to cancel it Clarel [The Author]

I. 2037 e.v.

He gripped the crystal glass and hated it. He hated the glass.

He saw the amber restorative and wanted it out of the square glass and *into his mouth as refuge from the goddamn motherfucking glass*, he thought maniacally as he raised it sharply and dumped the remaining two ounces into his mouth.

The bottle now came into view. *It was low, way low, too low*, he thought in a measuring of threes.

The container was oily with scotch on the walls of the glass, and he saw his greasy prints on the outer edge. He watched the floor -his own feet- through the bottom of the lead-crystal which shrank the feet but not the ground. The room's light and its objects were laid out on the floor and this was magnified by the thick bottom; his warped view was bright and bent and below him as he felt as a vexed Zeus in the clouds over Olympus.

Each thing -he thought- was against him, opposed; or turning away in rebuke.

His heart raced and he reached for the *diazepam* he'd loaded into his silver bottle. It was old, very old; it was the apothecary flask of Poe; Rachel had bought it four years ago for him on the eighth anniversary of their girl's death; a demise which had been five-years to the day of her birth. It was worn matte at the shoulders, worn shiny at the threads of the top, and he unscrewed it and dumped 10mg into his palm. He reached for the *Laphroigh* 18-year and drank straight from it until it -and the *valium* - were gone from his maw.

The girl's memory remained.

The memory looked now three dimensional; coated and greasy and made him wish he had no eyes with which to see or no world upon which to look. He wished for the void of either eye -mind- or the world.

He allowed Rachel to memorialize their daughter's birth and death with such annual gifts; he took them as heard -acknowledged- expressions of unutterable grief tied back-to-back with gratitude for the chance to issue forth and thus know tiny Valance at all. He remembered things like the way his daughter's eyes had widened, the pupils dilated; he recalled the way her hands closed around his mouth and his hair. *Valance had grasped at the world via him*, he thought; she reflexively took in as much of Boyd as she could.

Boyd Sou -as the scotch cooled in the throat but kept the belly warm- saw Harrissa out of the corner of his eye and he knew that murdering her was an option.

"Always an option," he said under his breath -quiet, but louder than if he didn't want anyone to hear- as she looked about to locate the inarticulate sound she had heard; the threat implied, the spell half formed. Her back still had scratches from last night; her spine still was high above the flesh and ragged and ran from sciatic nerve to dorsal horn.

Her legs and vulva were sore.

He remembered the way her skin appeared to flush and go white in blotches such that his PGC -photographing all that he saw- would then send these strange images to Nathan from which to build a map of the forest. His cock was a delta formation, an invasionary force into the wilderness. He

stretched the rubric of science to its limit and claimed maps could be built from heat and skeletal structures and blood flow and that one girl -his one of two girls- could serve as one acre of forest for the million acres he wanted to see.

He'd build the whole forest -where those brigands hid- from one acre of her back that mimicked the mountains with her jagged spine that rose above the slopes of each side. He'd claw her -Rachel too- and these lines would be roads to their -these *Blackjacks* - hideout and drawn blood would be rivers to each of his manifold prey.

He had become strange; incomprehensible to his staff. His girls took what signs of love they could from him; of rhyme or reason they no longer asked. But the Governor's staff just shuttled data to PraXis, or CIs they knew, or pawnbrokers, or cops -detectives- in Major Crimes. They didn't look at the notes passed, they didn't question motives or drives.

He acted as if his ideas were sane. He pretended to believe in what they might get in return.

His CoS would never say a word; the map would just be built and the Governor would never know if it was useful or not. Some things went to Nathan and some on to MO. The Governor was less and less involved. He said things, he did things, he handed off more and more. He expected results to come back to him in due course. He lived; he performed sexual rites; he read from books half way between beginning and end. He listened to Rachel's dreams for key words and he waited for lesions or bruises to appear on Harrissa's white skin.

He hated that their veins lay low as his always rose; he squeezed their necks during sex just to get them to reveal their sanguinary roads.

He gave out data like this the way God scattered clouds and stars and blood from elk on the ground and let the snow absorb the warmth three times its crystals and retreat in deltas and capillaries and let the wolves be influenced by the wind around their fetlocks and claws. Boyd Sou gave each member of his kingdom more data than they could absorb. But they took it all and he kept producing more and more from the life that had now become all ritual, all designed to catch his foils out there in the mountains and the trees.

They were fucking up his numbers; and he'd use numbers to find them and reduce them to nothing at all.

Men of intelligence see patterns, both those extant and those vapor & clouds. And thus, men of intelligence cannot be discerned from madmen at all.

Harrissa -perched now on the vanity's counter doing her make-up- stopped and looked doe-like, innocent, and he saw now that that was her ancient move sent from 1-million years ago. That look was a ballistic fired from evolution into the future: the weapon of feigned innocence, of rapt attention, of *ersatz* awe. It was the arms race of weak to strong, the great lie, for the weak could make the strong pause; pause as if their words, their shrieking -the strong's unbottled malice- was enough. *Prey first froze, first in real awe, then in this*, he thought of her bullshit, *this false paralytic. And that disarmed the predatory gaze and intent; let the incisor -made for the neck and the jugular- dry in the wind and inside the cave of the hesitant and open jaw.*

He saw the copper fang of the inmate absorb the light of the lab in that ugly grin of his. He saw nothing above the nose nor below the chin in this memory of a man he both hated and favored like a tool handed to him by the gods.

It was a lie, he thought. *The female, the subaltern, they all just pretended to be scared, pliant, submissive, and all the while plotting, scheming, making three conjoined moves in their head. Evolution had made women into the blackbird, because men - he stopped to think- men, were willing to be led grey wolves.*

"What does that mean?" he asked aloud as his breath rippled the bottom of the scotch -raised to the mouth- of his square glass. His own thoughts beset him. His own burlblings came from beyond.

He had thought it and yet didn't know its implications, much less its origins; he did not see the wolves tear open the carcass for the birds, nor the birds look out over the lands above the lupine's gravid fur. It was one of those errant thoughts too perfect for the man who utters it to understand. The point, the razor-sharp point, only had effect once it landed far away from the man who threw it. The spear -the broadhead- did no damage for

99% of its life in the arc of the air. Like words read one hundred -one thousand- years after written down; he had no idea from whence it had come. Like the man who wrote them had no idea upon whom they would land.

He hated that crime was up -way up, statistically- and that the largest criminal syndicate -according to his spies- was right here in Colorado. It was an affront; a mockery of his plans. He gripped the glass as he had no grip on his spiraling pique; his eyes locked onto Harrissa as he had no way to bar the door to his feelings of vex.

The book that would have helped him understand it -marked up in black ink with one species of shark crossed out and one genus of canine lay on top of the page- sat ignored on the table a meter from him. It had Rachel's DNA all over it; its code all stood-up inside him and her and their child that had twelve long years ago -at age sixty-months and over a three-day period in which nobody but Harrissa had slept- had so strangely died and been whisked away. People would be amazed if they knew what the strongest men cannot take.

But, he had no idea that a man didn't need the eyes of the corvid, extended as they may be, nor the black *magjick* of the woman, to help him see. He used technology where simple things might suffice.

He had conception that such a man -the man he sought- might breathe this same high elevation air. He said *Blackjacks* like a man said *Home* or *Country* or *God* : like it was *one* complete thing. But Blax's Jacks were as torn apart as his home and his country at the very least. Fractured things out in the forest were gazed upon by things cleaved in the city. Earth rumbled, air roiled, water heated and boiled.

Fires started and went out in the woods.

And that man -up at 8,760 feet that needed no raven to guide him, no woman to assuage him- was already standing upright hundreds of miles away staring -north, northeast- back toward the Governor as well. He had a nose from a wolf carved upon the prow -eyes of gold doubloons up in the nest- made of a more complete beast lashed to the ship's mast itself that plunged into the all-conjoined seas. And that man too was half-intelligent, two-thirds mad, and consumed with vex.

And he held the Governor's daughter in his mind if not his hand exactly.

The FBI had fourteen field agents in the Governor's office that morning, and Boyd Sou had been told -seven hours ago- by the United States Attorney General that the state of Colorado was going to be taken over by the DOJ and the FBI if the Governor didn't have a plan for these 18,834 murders. And a plan meant a suspect, and a suspect meant a perp-walk, and a perp walk meant live on goddamn TV.

POTUS himself had called Boyd three hours ago and spoken to him with too much bravura Sou thought; he had spoken to him as if the Governor worked for the President when Boyd Sou didn't think it worked that way at all. Sou had been smirking as they spoke; their large LED screens showing each man to each man, each sound ricocheting as if off each angle of each face; each word filling each space with a Doppler whine as portentous as the vector -of the flame- of errant comet tail. Sou had pulled back his jacket and let the shoulder holster and 1911-pistol go dark about his grey shirt as the President spoke.

He'd vaguely threatened the President of the United States of America with a subtle move, and each man had taken note; each man's security detail bristling, tantamount to neural firing within *nanoseconds* like nerves connected to main hubs of neurons excited by electric bursts within. These were the ways of recalcitrant men; the western -formerly southern- men of rebellion and pride.

Nobody said *civil war* , but it was there in the air. The Governor drank from his soda water -it too imbued- as the President filled the room with his words.

Each of them threatened the other as the state of Colorado had almost 19,000 fewer criminals breathing -and thus plotting- inside the state. Each man was speaking of crime but thinking of what might fill the void.

Both of them took an obvious victory and made it into a dark defeat precisely because neither one of them had a hand in it. Old rulers would have seen this operation as evidence of God on their side, a plague sent, an emissary received. But modern leaders no longer believe in such things. They worried about what they ought to revel in and they ignored what ought to keep them up all night.

That conversation was a third of a day ago and the thousands of pieces about the kings had moved in a thousand and one ways.

Isaiah had learned much from the ancients as he stared at the sandstone *stelae* on the walls of the lab; each of the dozen equidistant apart and hanging at 74" long and weighing just at 92.72727 kilograms. He'd learned of mankind the animal, less so of man the modern invention; but he watched and listened and paid attention to little things. And he -Isaiah- was allowing the video feed of the Governor's mansion to recede now as he was focused on staring at the ivy as it encroached like curious creeping things upon the hewn rock. The greenery reflected out the narrow spectrum of the lab's light back at him; all but what it absorbed.

The Governor stared at the amber stain in his own thick-bottomed glass; it was now 23:59hrs.

"President of what?" Governor Sou had said -he now recalled- when later that evening he'd been asked by Nathan what had, *the president said*, to him.

Sou wondered more about his Ai, and why they had failed to see or stop this incursion by the cartel -it was agreed aloud that it was the cartel even as China was suspected at least half way- into his state. He ignored POTUS's stupid threats to declare martial law and instead thought how mysterious it was that he could reduce crime from the inside of each man -each criminal- so easily, so effectively, so verifiably, and yet fail to see this over-the-top move. He saw each man he fixed in the brain -*via* DNA- as the only thing truly called *man* in his snow-globe territory -this *menagerie* - above the rest of the country that sloped down from it. Other men were not included, like data held back from any analysis; like numbers rounded up or down.

But it was other men who wrecked his experiment as the sea sunk the boat even as brawny sailors manned the pumps.

He felt his borders enforced and saw all men outside his state not as chaotic men but as southern winds, not as individuals but as aggregates, not as neurons but brain. *It was like* -and here he was about to make an analogy of a man and his own home, when he saw that too fall apart and thus he scuttled the analogy, before it was even really born; launched. The thing it was to represent dissipated and this forced his mind to go black and blank.

His coder re-started and allowed him to regain his train of thought.

Everything he'd accomplished was wiped away with one night; *one night worth of murders*, he thought, *one night of someone killing the worst scum in Colorado was going to ruin nineteen years of crime reduction that he had achieved with genius, bravura, and élan. It was absurd. Every crime from drug dealing to kidnappings to assaults and homicides were down by an average of nearly 40% and yet to hang nearly 19,000 misdemeanor-murders on me would wreck it all. And that those murdered were all criminals themselves, and that the crime rate would likely go down another 50% or more thanks to these dead losers was something everyone knew and yet nobody could -or would- say.*

He was enraged that the truth amongst all these lies was what made everyone afraid.

He had no control over that. He -the Governor- only had control over the CRISPR program; *and it had worked*, he thought as he gripped the unconforming glass. *But the media and his enemies would not give a shit about all that data; they'd focus only on this anomalous night*. He thought of Isaiah's face now, and how it had feigned -he was certain it was insincere- feigned ignorance as to how such a thing could take place.

The Governor wondered not *why* but *how* his Ai had lied.

His Ai had each entrance and egress covered; they knew almost every move each citizen -and illegal alien- took. And yet Isaiah had claimed to not have a clue how such a thing had happened. *He'd intimated the Chinese had done it, with their own Ai*, the Governor then thought. Boyd had not liked how insouciant both MO and Isaiah had been. He'd been -back then- made furious by how dispassionate they were.

Now he was in heartache as the days leading up to the anniversary of his only child's birth and death -approaching haptically; eleven days he saw advance like an army, marching toward him upon Rachel's skin and into the tunnel of his eyes, inside Rachel's own darkening mood- as these days he both saw in and saw throughout the calendar of the world. All of that used rage for fuel and each sinister and errant thought was his high-carbon exhaust. His grief annealed with his vex; his personal loss combined with his political defeats.

He was more and more a machine himself, and the world responded to him as such. The world loaded lead ball; he ejected brass shell.

Hands once extended were pulled back away; gazes averted except to the edges; words reduced to mere mentions; his feelings synthesized into inputs and outputs and his body was cautiously navigated now. His eyes pointed down; along the roadway, to some destination only he cared for anymore. His girls moved around him; no longer with him.

And both sides saw the other as alien and extreme.

My crime rate, he repeated to himself, *had fallen 40% since 2018, year over year, and it was going to be the new year in four fucking days*. In 2038 he would not run; barely serve, and he almost felt like saying, *fuck it*. He asserted that his record would stand on its own. But the problem was that MO had told him with 19,091 murders in Colorado in 2037, the over-all crime rate for his tenure would go up 471.8% total not drop 39.1% as it would without these murders. And the Governor could not stand it. He could not stand that 510.9% swing. It was -to him- neither accurate nor acceptable.

It was accurate, he admitted, *yet untrue*.

And his jaw ran on rails beneath his skull. His brain ran and slipped in the blood within and without.

And, the Governor thought, *the goddamn beetle bark problem was back; now in its third year*. The winter was wet, but he knew the spring and summer were likely to be hot -the weather reports told him to expect it- and the forests down south especially were brown and fragile; the western slope was scarred with bi-ways again as a new cycle of shale exploration -and directional drilling- had begun in 2035. He'd seen aerial maps that made the state look equal parts dry and brown and mangy and riven with *ad hoc* roads by the oilfield trucks like varicose veins beneath tanned and bruised skin.

He saw relief in dark spots -denoting fecundity- in the San Isabel Forest and around Creede; between Durango and Trinidad, and also up north in the Yampa Valley. They were like murky zones in brains scans -the *orbital* and *ventralPFC* and *amygdala* all hot in mirror blacks of the negative scans of

inmate 16180339 and cool - in the other inmates he'd seen, he thought- *in the lab all those years ago* . He now thought of this, as if laying one map over another -like stacking books upon the next to tidy up- and not taking any note of the relative location of the spots in the forest that were still lush and green in walnut, almond, and *Mandelbrot* shapes. The forest was largely dead and dying from drought and pest; and the map looked like PET scans of islands of CNS regions all alive and febrile in the man with fire in his synaptic veins and commissure lanes.

The Governor toggled back and forth between brain scans and *Landsat8* images of the woods. Like a strobe his mind lit up what spun too fast to see without closing the eyes most of the time.

What was ocean, what was land, what was forest, what was man? was unasked, unanswered, as the Governor weighted all his worries up as each solution he had a hand in grew five fingers that grabbed back at his throat.

But, for now it was just some random *loci* he figured as he thought similarly of the inmates' bad brains; even as the leaves -the scans, the maps- of man and forest were thus lain, he saw each gene as fixable, each brain region could heal, each part of his state -even the feral parts- could be sorted out one-by-one without any worry beyond the borders that were so clear and normally -nearly perfectly- enforced. He zoomed in. He concentrated.

He saw zeros and ones.

He gave no thought for the grey wolves from New Mexico that crossed the one southern border of trees; zero interest in the blackbirds that led them in the high-altitude breeze.

Plus, he had other maps -individual maps- on his mind.

He'd spent weeks divining either side of his girls' continental divides. He'd watched them each move and build crag-shadows and raise flatirons and construct pools of sweat in divots and draw blood from scratches and bend knuckles and elbows and move their jaws -grinding- like plates tectonic. He had bent them and fucked them and made them sit down and squeal high. His right hemisphere and PGC had seen all flesh as soil -all fair hairs as *Aspen* woods- in the dark of their congress. It built models he need never even understand. He'd hand it over like codes, like cyphers, like poems

untranslated from dead languages; like orders from on high down to the troops.

He'd let the cloud decipher each thing he saw with each eye; heard with each ear; felt with tip of tongue and finger and cock. *He was to be the thing examined*, he thought. *He was the source* .

He sent data over to the PraXis cloud like errant thoughts -like hand gestures- and combined it with the maps of Harrissa's prone back and the flush skin and the *topo -maps* and the fecund forest and the desiccated mountain sides and the dry creek beds and the unmelted snow pack and the trails of elk and the circling wolves and the hovering ravens and the march of his bounty hunters all loaded up in images, then pixels, then integers, and finally in equations inside MO's mind as he watched Isaiah toss the black rock from hand to hand in the lab just like pendulum marking time that the arms thus -eventually- told to -led- the eyes.

Despite his erudition and training, the Governor was so obsessed with managerial tasks -so consumed with politics of making each thing fit each other piece- that he had lost touch with patterns and saw one brain region going dark or one part of the state and its vast woodlands as melting into another and bleeding into each other; he lost all feel for what details meant inside larger details as he vacuumed up more and more data from sex with his girls and feasting upon dishes made of 3 beasts and 6 grains and 9 nightshade greens mottled and dark on each side of red veins and white borders upon plates with right angles and flat at center and heavy in weight.

He stared at his forks he rose to his lips and said, "poison arrows," as if all at the table would be ok with such things.

He argued with foes, augured with random throws, just to take their replies and feed them into the corporate cloud like organic compounds from chemists and incantations from witches. He force-fed MO like geese with a future as *pate* . He collected each single thing and let the whole come back from his machines.

He demanded his staff solve for *pi* and his rivals clean away from the halls of government as he strode by. He was offended they didn't hide in their offices or broom closets at the golden domed capital when not casting

ballots and sit still in the rotunda or grand hall and give voice-votes with mere nods.

He stared now -absently at the corner of the bathroom's vanity- at a black box full of jewels that hid a playing card -half a one-eyed Jack- behind a thin false bottom that Harrissa had. It was by her knee but all he could see was that she was in his view and it made him turbulent inside. His left hemisphere had no knowledge of the card; his instincts growled and made his neck-hairs stand up. He assumed it was from his hatred of the woman that he had taken as half a full bride.

The second rock, the other half of the pair to Isaiah's black rune was next to that secret card and was all but dissolved.

But he didn't see it, and she didn't think of it -it had not been used in seventeen years- and so he sent a DM to his own mansion hub with ideas that were pragmatic and mundane. But, then he canceled it. He was certain he was being hacked now. He was so certain that he rose from his chair and grabbed a piece of paper from his roll top desk and scrambled for an ink pen from the drawer. He wrote co-ordinates upon it; a cell phone number -a burner- that would reach Craig Sawyer; and the code with an Asterix-cypher of just six terminals.

He walked the palmed note to the stairway as Harrissa did her make-up in the mirror of the bathroom and each caught each other in the peripheral vision; she powdered up her right cheek and he bounded down the stairs to the valet. The Governor told the concierge he'd be out for an hour. Boyd Sou then walked to the garage and grabbed the keys to the SRT8 300 and fell into its low carriage. He started it up as the garage door began rolling up like the stone away from the mouth of the cave. He was tired of the bullshit, the incessant lying by everyone, *and it made life not even worth living*, he thought, as he pressed the accelerator to the floor. *Who*, he thought, *would even want to live in such a world?*

It was here that death made more sense than he would admit. He'd prefer to straighten a road, he thought instead.

This is the essential difference between men of type and between men and women *writ large*: to some men lying makes living hollow and not worth it; scheming abrades the strong's soul the way knuckles break the skin of

the vulnerable. Some men would rather die than live a lie. And this is how God made them. And nobody -nobody- but that man -that leader of men- himself understands this even a little bit, except maybe that brigand, maker of shine, that sigma lurking just one year older, three clicks to starboard, five nautical miles to the rear and out on the horizon; but made of nearly the same ingredients and almost the same tragedy of common experience; the shadow to the form of the man -the leader- that everyone sees.

The rest of the world plots and enjoys the game within the game. But, the some men hate this second -hidden- game and thus, one day, he is likely to refuse to play. The simple man just wants to play a straight game; one where talent and strength and magnanimity and charm will let him win fair and square. The leader loves his crew, his team, his employees; his tribe. He just wishes they too loved him and would play the game straight. He wishes they were *ok* with second place or even losing in a world of straight lines and clean edges and an articulated right and wrong.

And most of his tribe is *ok* with second place under his natural leadership. But it only takes one to ruin the game; it only takes one spark to set it ablaze; one guy who thinks the game includes the feint and the false move; one schemer, one liar, one cheater.

But, the sigma thinks even deeper; lower, more ancient and reclusive and singularly. The sigma thinks of what he can accomplish -not with others- but alone. He never plots; he jockeys for no slot; he is happy to carve out a life on his own. He plays the game against the four elements and the cardinal directions; he plays the game against himself and God.

Isaiah stared at the *stelae* in the lab and noticed the knives of *Kulullu* , and in *Kusarikku* the eyes.

Isaiah saw snow in the atmosphere, *a storm -many storms- were coming* , he thought as the divide lay inert as pressure descended and moisture crystalize at 19,000 feet above sea level and the animals bedded down with their backs to outcroppings and in caves that held bones from the ancestors of more species than he cared to count.

The Jacks were just beginning to build deep in the forest and heavy things were landing in place. He saw that they avoided the parts of the forest in which they'd been sent to, exiled, tested and given -received- scars and

loose teeth and tight brows. They didn't build in where Blax had sent them to test them and given them limps that made their minds scared of what the body could easily made to be. He saw these place of trails and trials as graveyards and even prey animals avoided them in their grazing as if this would curry favor with the Jacks and diminish their appetites.

The animals hopped on one foot.

Isaiah watched now as Boyd kicked the rear-wheel-drive sedan sideways out of the garage, missing one of his bikes by no more than eight inches, and the car gathered itself straight just as he hit the aperture of the door. The black night was bruised with building lights above and the beams of other cars heading all against him on his own plane of the road.

He jammed it right out of the manse's side-drive and onto the street with squealing of soft rubber around the tension of un-sprung weight of his carbon-fiber wheels over torqueing, spinning, squirming -that Harrissa faintly heard from her station above- as the woman now lined her eyes in black and thought of the man she would soon meet.

Each thing was a machine to each thing in the mansion and everything out on the street.

Boyd felt drunk -he was drunk- and he sent a DM to the lab. *I'll be there in three hours* , it said. He passed the capital with its gold dome -laid overtop the original copper sheathing- and merged onto Colfax -the longest and most wicked road in America- and then on to I-25 south. He reached nearly 93-miles-*per* -hour on the highway lit up in the dim lights of slower -and trailing- cars.

II. 2037 e.v.

"I know you can find them. I know it," he said with his jaw tight and he thus truncated each word -each phoneme- as Isaiah had said -replied- that he had been looking for years and found nothing *useful* at all.

The Governor clinched fists tighter and jaw further and looked at MO with his head as his body still faced Isaiah in perfect broadside. His anger was measured metabolically and *via* heat signatures and gene expression to both Ai units. But Isaiah also felt his own body become autonomically loaded for

conflict with increased respiration and heart rate and 4% increase in epinephrine as his pupils dilated in the low-light of the lab. He saw lines in the face, about the eyes, he saw the man's pulse in the neck and at each wrist pulse faster and faster with 0303hrs vex.

Isaiah began to run through the protocols for self-defense, the exact newtons and foot-pound of pressure he'd exact at each articulation of the executive if he came toward him with this malice that seemed to vortex and torque and spin like heavenly bodies above. The hairs seemed to float over the skin; the skin itself moved color from centers to edges and transported movement and outgassing and exchange from below to above.

The man thus filled the room with his sorties of each emotion and its endocrine corollaries, the Governor was taking up more and more space with his rage.

Isaiah had told him that the *Blackjacks* were likely not even in Colorado, now; if ever. They had been given this name by the media after a series of riven Jack of Spades playing cards had been -here and there- found in the ruins of these incessant robberies and murders -at first inside Colorado- beginning many months ago. Isaiah tried to convince him that the culprits were likely from out-of-state and using Colorado as their playground.

But the Governor knew better. The revival of these diagonally cut cards had been the least of his evidence. But he held them up anyway. MO and Isaiah did not react.

The operation against his state had not been random, *they were Colorado men, a gang, and this cartel bullshit is for civilians, not me*, Isaiah, the Governor had said; and MO and Isaiah had admitted these were -as the executive had asked about earlier- likely the same one's doing so much damage around the world as well. They had attempted to show him the meta data, how it was likely a larger group, like the cartels or the Chinese who were threatened by the Governor's work; making a mess of his own crime stats on purpose to scuttle his labor and ruin the executive himself.

MO and Isaiah conspired to use facts -true facts- to occlude the truth of who these men were.

This was when they made serious mention of the idea of an instantiated Chinese Ai. The more Sou tried to hone in on the *Blackjacks* , the more Isaiah expanded the map and the more MO populated it with things -true things- to look at and see.

But the Governor was tired of excuses -and enraged by the presence of the President and the FBI in his state- and thus wanted the location of these brigands and piratical bastards and he began making all manner of wild threats and accusations and condemnations in three or more languages known -and one unknown- to man. He used backward numbers to spell words and blurted out ragged words to make spells, and he foamed more and more around the mouth and watered some about one of the eyes.

His cheek was cooled by this water -in one line- like a scar. His voice -his throat- was cleared by one line his Ai uttered next.

“I’ll develop a new drone,” Isaiah said finally, pacifying -all at once- the Governor with a solution of five words.

Isaiah said one more thing but knew the man would not demand any further information, he had -Isaiah had- pushed him to the edge of his ability to handle this frustration and anger and feelings of wounded pride and loss of control. Isaiah knew it would calm him, turn the flame off -from under his roiling waters- and offer relief to each chemical interaction and redlining of his anxiety and fear and hostility at all that would not submit to his will.

“It will locate a specific kind of man,” Isaiah added with 9% more bass in his voice and folded his arms to signal he too was a man in this world, and that the Governor ought to take yes for an answer.

It was subtle -and perfectly orchestrated- and MO watched it with algorithms cascading in him like rivulets of water on smooth surface; crinkling and bending like asps. He took note of each rise and fall of each of their main bio-metrics and watched as the Governor’s and Isaiah’s movements -and tone of voice and outgassing- all met in the air between them like armies clashing as each general watched from elevated positions at the theater’s edge.

The Governor thought to ask how it worked, and why it would catch his foils, but he just turned and said, *ok* .

He knew that it was likely dangerous, illegal, and not something he would approve of if given the details. So, he just stuffed all that down and allowed his Ai to give him what he wanted. *At whatever cost* , he said to himself as he exited the lab. The ivy -hanging at the top corners of the aperture-swayed in the wind of his furious opening of the grey steel door.

The new asps Isaiah had bred and allowed to live in the wall-garden had built nests at the edges, the corners, and anywhere they saw opening to a place they might want to explore.

III. 2038 e.v.

Craig Sawyer's team had five men; they moved south by southwest spaced ten meters apart. They were looking for sign; not contact with the enemy; they had their weapons slung.

They had co-ordinates, but they were not approaching the location just yet. They were scouting the five-mile perimeter first. They were told the specifics of the *Blackjacks* location and technology in the debrief at the IHOP just outside of Florence almost a week ago; Nathan had given them Isaiah's report. Sawyer -using tact and also protecting his *op-sec* - would wait to tell his team that he considered this forest to be a *non-permissive environment* ; and that the state of Colorado had no control over it at all.

Sawyer's team-drones scanned the air above them at a thousand feet over the compound itself.

Reports came back in three-second burst; updating with all heat signatures; all evidence of life. *The bragging about Las Animas country being home to the second largest elk herd in North America was no bullshit*, Craig thought as he -now in his seventies and jacked to the gills on every endocrine boost a man could handle so that he moved with the strength and agility of a man half his age- traipsed behind his team and took in all data like the hub of a wheel; the *cerebellum* of the expanding mammalian brain.

The drones had tagged and reported on 804 elk in the ten-mile radius of their camp. Species of bacteria and *Ursus americanus* were also noted and foldered and given weight and numbers for Craig.

He let the biometrics pass by him as the drones did their work. His knuckles ached and he flexed them as his .308 carbine rested on the table his lap made in a crouch.

Each drone -there were four- traveled in loops in their quadrant; they flew and scanned below and took turns venturing out searching for other - enemy- drones; they flew low and then high in stochastic designs to prevent pattern recognition software -that the enemy may have- from detecting them based upon their aerial moves. Sawyer's team had been told the target had their own recon-drones that flew missions this far out; and that -if discovered- his teams' drones would alert the *Blackjacks* and scuttle the mission.

Thus, the task was divided -unevenly- into three parts.

Sawyer's team was in phase two of three.

The team's drones had been outfitted with a new cloaking-tech PraXi's had developed recently and Craig had been told it made them invisible to their target's clones as long as they didn't invade the proximity of the *Blackjacks'* aerial-machines any closer than eighteen meters; that was the distance at which -it was asserted- the cloaking-device would fail.

The Governor would not call his foils by their *nom de guerre* : the *Blackjacks* . And he had been explicit about enforcing a deracination of these brigands and outlaws -not merely refusing to call them by their true moniker, but side-eyeing anyone who fucked-up and forgot- even as *graffito* of the *Blackjacks* had appeared all over Denver and the Springs and up north by Wyoming.

Painted stencils and over-night murals appeared on edges to buildings; ominous posters were ragged and stapled and glued to the glass of businesses and the walls of narrow brick alleys and the red doors of tattoo shops along *Cherokee* and 6th *avenue* ; on the large windows -with rare and expensive *Mexica* jewelry and stone plugs in the display- of *Broadway's Sol Tribe* ; on the stucco walls of narrow doorways of MMJ shops on 38th and 13th and in the *foyer* of apartment buildings on *Williams* and on splintered wooden poles outside car dealerships in Aurora and on the windshields of

vehicles in parking lots of the salons of *Darque Tan*, the offices of *Bighorn Directional* , the warehouses of *Aspen drilling LLC* .

It was a subtle tactic of annoying one's enemy.

A governor -a politician- must focus on how he is perceived; and to reify Blax and his Jacks with these tactics of underground art made the executive's refusals to acknowledge them seem not merely petty but a sign of weakness.

If the Jacks were willing to be named -as the *graffito* and *propaganda* posters implicitly announced- then to refuse to name them was a sign -it would be implied- that each appearance of that very name was proof that the State and the Governor had no control at all. *Whatever your enemy wants , you do the opposite* , it would be said, felt, and if the Governor wanted them anonymous, then their name would appear like obdurate weeds all over the Governor's lawn.

As soon as the paint was pressure-washed off the tag would saturate another wall or window close by; as quickly as they were torn down the posters would reappear. The city -and the state- was pockmarked with evidence of the Jacks. That it was only one Jack -outside the sanction of the group- who was doing this was unknown to anyone except Blax and the remaining -ramified- Jacks.

Each side in this fight bristled at the actions of Jack Four.

Hashtags of *#WarIsComing* were scrawled in matte grey on black buildings and scrawls of, *Pain Demands a Response* was sprayed in dark bronze on chipped barn-red brick and allowed to splotch at the ends like back-spray from a GSW and messily drip like tears or blood or the first weeping of May rains.

Articles in *Westword* had been written using anonymous sources explaining the *sobriquet*.

After reading of them -as she waited for dinner to be served in the mansion- Harrissa said the name -the number- of each Jack under her breath. She repeated each name -*sotto voce* - as she orgasmed from the Governor's angry cock sawing her masochistic *yoni* -his knotty-pine lumber against the steel of her cunt- and as she kissed her dear Rachel's portal -to the long-

thought dead child- she made shapes with her tongue corresponding to the letters in specific appellation of each pirate up and out in their hills.

She cast hexes in her mind that began with numbers and ended in division and weight.

Rachel's foyer to her womb laid to rest in Harrissa's acidic and contaminated mouth as Rachel herself thought of other things that had names farther -further- back; places before death and before life; before pain. Harrissa lapped as Rachel's center like a long-tongued beast searching for the marrow beneath; and she used her tongue to taste things she already knew and spell out what she wanted to one-day see up close.

Each of the three climaxed together and yet were never further apart in their hearts.

Rachel came -submitted- to reach heights from which she could signal her child -her daughter- who she still knew was somehow alive. She told no one, but if anyone asked she never lied. Her and her daughter -she would insist- dreamed at night together and communicated in moments of reverie and places of sublunary dungeons of all kinds.

Rachel spoke -via dreams- to Valance at night. And words passed between them the way birds turned as a flock; fish moved as schools; and both eyes of forward-facing predators turned to the thing not yet in the belly but in sight.

With the pressure of the Governor inside her -rushing her like heavy waves- and with the soft & pink sea-salt of Rachel on her tongue, Harrissa saw the memory -in 2020- of the black rune sink to the bottom of the glass three times over nine months. She recalled how Rachel's belly had grown like a mountain itself; she'd watch her lay down on the bed and her midriff rise like the continental divide. Harrissa surveyed both head and feet as she held the rune-rock in her hand and breathed shallowly at bed time.

She let the name Blax be swallowed down into her belly as her methamphetamine-mind sparked and haloed and burst into flames inside each brain module cleaved by folds in the grey matter and outlined in antique and ovum of myelinated white. She came -orgasmed- so hard that she vibrated about her surface -Boyd's anger at her thus whet her pussy and

made moist just one of her eyes- and his hands laid so heavy on her back that she felt herself a parabola; each vertebrae a part of some 144-integer math. The more he hated her the harder -more dramatically- she reached sexual slake.

She stuck around for the punishment.

His sanction had shaken hands with her *thalamus* and dopamine centers and a pact had been made. She knew he couldn't love her and so she sought out his most passionate hate. Some people would rather be hated than ignored; and this is something leaders often forget as they move their pieces all over the board as if people were too made of onyx, mica, or jade.

The Governor and his girls, each with at least one opaque eye and a half wounded sexual organ, tits pimples from cold -for he had opened the manse's windows in winter so that their prurient screams would burst out into the *ciudad's* air- and each with clitoris reddening, swelling and labia wrinkles manifold, all fucked each other in logical movements that made sets of two upon three equaling one under the triumvirate of the whole. As this midnight congress of naked and shorn women and the rarely unclothed Governor met -in time not location- the swaddled and black-clad operators hired by Nathan -at the Governor's request- moved deeper into the forest to locate and eliminate these specific *enemies of the State*.

It would be just passed the witching-hour soon enough.

Sou beat his girls like drums; the taut skins vibrated out into the city which glowed as far as it could to light up the dark of the forest that the Jacks hunkered down in and nervously patrolled. But not one lumen from one city touched the San Isabel. Only the arachnida's fractal surface and large-cat's vertical eyes held starlight; the bark absorbed the effluvium of fireflies in pulses; the forest floor covered up core -and absorbed- heat too cool to make light. It was dark in the forest and the cities looked like planets with distances of lightyears between them and the compound atop of ridges the *Landsat8* satellites never could see.

The Jacks were away from *Lot 45* -sent off on reconnaissance of their own- and the Bust too was in Florence. Blax was alone.

Isaiah knew this, but tonight he refused to look.

Sawyer trusted those above him in the chain just enough to take -and execute- the mission; but he looked over his shoulder the whole time. He'd been well compensated; outfitted with the latest reconnaissance technology and demolitions materiel, but he admitted he still felt ill-at-ease. *One could never trust in either man's heart nor his head* , he thought, and so he told his team to take a knee and check in. How America -a state like Colorado- could devolve into an NPE made him nervous not just for him and his men, but his country *writ large* .

"What's up boss?" Roger Thanan -a former Army 18C - sent *via* DM. He had been the last to get the PGC implanted and was still using full words and sentences instead of the coders' specific *inter-com argot* .

"CGTCAACG," Craig sent back as rebuke and the other team members -eavesdropping- smiled as they knelt in the humus of the San Isabel forest at 2345hrs.

Thanan felt the sting of correction and grimaced under his war paint and the channel remained quiet while he let his coder link up his thoughts to the team's code.

Sawyer explained that he wanted the drones to do further *recon* and search for enemy aerals before they moved on the location itself. They had moved up and back -on foot- through each quadrant since yesterday at 0600 and were now in the final assault staging. He wanted the drones to do the closing reconnaissance and pre-load the compound with the explosives if they could get there without being intercepted.

He watched through his viewfinder as the B-drone led the pack from the south. He could see now above the treetops and the undulating landscape in the winter forest. It rolled and was vacant of humans, each tree just one drop in this sea-of-aggregate-green. He rested and hydrated and let the AV come in and bifurcate into two phases of autonomic *recon* and also that which he would personally inspect.

If his autonomic system detected anything of interest it would shuffle it over to his conscious interface, but it would develop the plan all on its own and his body and mind would follow it unless he needed to do a second-order error detection of the coder's methods. The drones brought back data that was processed into instincts, feelings, that would appear in the mind of

each man. This new operational coding software pulled a man toward the agreed upon mission -at each level of instantiation of tactic- like a desire pulled the loins or song of a siren tugged at the ear and against the ropes.

It was not unlike the way the shaman previously informed himself with perspicacious dreams -with data gleaned of the forest and its animals by the right hemisphere- and then edified the tribe with song and art -and verse whispered to the chief- that laid too on the tribe's right brain. This was how not merely a person, but a people, came to a strong and compelling belief. The data that the dreams processed were for the old tribes to take in and digest overnight so that they may wake up the next morning in the know of what the old brain of the shaman had learned in the quiet and weirdness of the central nervous system that cannot speak but in song and poem and image of ontological reverie & doom.

The coders the team had been outfitted with now mimicked this by turning raw -infinite- dark and subsonic data from the forest -from the chaos- into instinct in rational men.

The former marine, sailor and DEVGRU operator waited until the drone clicked into arming mode and dove down into the airspace nine meters above the metal containers that Sawyer now -in his linked NVG- saw come into view.

Sawyer told the team to move -in a straight line- toward the objective. They rose from their crouch and did exactly as they were commanded as -a hundred meters off- one herd of elk bulls blew hot steam of respiration into flanks of mates; worn racks grazed tree branches and those of the other males and sounded like books hitting the floor. Grunts released pressure inside their heavy bodies and the whole herd moved in spirals within spirals down in two-thousand-meter-above-sea-level glens; in flat spots of ravines where they'd bed down for the night. They smelled wolves in cavitations of the air -like rumors- and as their hearts enlarged and flexed they breathed faster to increase information carried in waves of night air. Their hooves moved like hands on stringed instruments in syncopation to the combination of the director's baton and their inner memories of how this song was -by one's ancestors- thus played.

Their necks held the weight of their racks, their legs held even more than that. The females made circle within the perimeter of the bulls; the offspring -one of which carried a *Medea* gene from a cow dead from a broadhead now nearly twenty years- were at the low center of a spiral; the zeros and ones of cows and tall bulls. *Aspen* trees stood like hung zebra pelts, *Pinons* like mule-deer hides left in the rain -all frazzled and ramified and brachial- and rocks leaned into -and out of- the dirt like fallen over markers from graveyards abandoned by long-extinct tribes of the wind. The elk were nervous and side-eyed each other from one cross of their atomized breath and at some center between the soft clacking of their only weapons at all.

The five-man team would reach their target in forty-four minutes at this rate -just trailing the drones- where they could set a perimeter to catch anyone who escaped the blast.

14. 79

I don't care what you say! What you do is your religion!

Zendik Farm talk 1998 [Zendik, Wulf]

If I don't treat you as a divine fragment, then you'll become angry; ok then, that's what you believe University of Toronto Lecture 2016 [Peterson, Jordan B]

When she asked him why he had done it, he said he had been so moved by the music that he just had to fight the bull. It was hard for me to believe this woman's story, but she swore it was true Miles the Autobiography [Davis, Miles]

I. 2035 e.v.

"Loneliness is lethal; and the risk of early death for the lonely man is at 45%. Alcoholism is at 35%. Obesity? A mere 20%," he said.

They stood upon the pad and listened. They sought no clarification. They knew he'd expound. He always felt the need to buttress each claim; expand; expatiate; go on and on.

Sadness, like permanent sadness, as a condition of life, is the thing we cannot admit to; seemingly we cannot do it as a culture. We must always insist there is hope. But in refusing to acknowledge the deep pain and crippling sadness we feel we are prolonging the acquiring of the knowledge that comes from this state of mind , he thought as he faced his men.

This was what separated the Russian from the American more than anything else. The Russian was in full acceptance of tragedy as judgement from God . Americans were beatific, like retards , Blax thought. But they weren't retarded, they were in the grip of the left hemisphere; the whole culture was rational and left brained and this is what made them optimistic and behave like the dim.

“If it is one thing I have noticed in myself and others,” Blax finally said, “is a lack of courage in facing pain. We avoid pain at all costs; at all costs to our self-esteem, our enlightenment, our relationships, our health, our integrity and our ability to be honest with ourselves and others. I’ve never been more sure that everyone is lying to me at all times than I am right now. I have come to believe that everyone is a pathological liar and it is because they are in pain and have almost no courage to face that pain.

“The CNS of a lonely person has brain region attenuation in the *amygdalin* and *dmPFC* areas that are critical for empathy. The more lonely we are the more we look for -and see- social threats; and the more we only see our own pain and risk. We become more paranoid and more likely to perceive others as a threat the more lonely we get. This is a classic positive feedback loop -in the negative sense- like melting sea ice allowing for more thermal absorption thus heating the sea water even more. Sleep patterns are disrupted by more nighttime micro interruptions; and cortisol released upon waking is increased in the lonely.

“I’m asking you to stop running from the pain and feel it. Feel it. Let it wash over you like slick sweat; like rain. Do not come in out of the rain. Stand and face it,” he said as they stood in perfectly dry -high-plains desert-air.

“Being in pain has shit to teach you. And I’m going to help translate what it is saying. Let me start with the math. *Your lie equals your pain*. Wulf said that to me eye-to-eye on Christmas day in ’98, the last Christmas he’d ever see; and he was right. But he forgot to add the corollary: *the truth isn’t going to feel much better . The truth equals ruin . But it will make that pain mean something -equal something- real*.

“So, we better take Orwell’s words as a guide-light. He once said that what separated him from others was not talent or intellect but his power of *facing hard truths* . This is not as facile and simple-minded as it may seem. How often do you face anything squarely; how often do you refuse to turn away even slightly from abrading winds, grit and the storms and whirlwinds that move in off the water and onto your shore?

“I knew what I wasn’t doing 99% of the time; I knew it by paying attention when I did it just that once; just that one time. The example of one moment

of facing a storm illuminated just how many times I had not done it and would not do it in the future unless I changed my whole philosophy on life.

“Your pain equals your enlightenment, and that can turn, one day, into some kind of truth. Now we have an equation. You lie equals your pain, your pain equals your enlightenment, your enlightenment equals some kind of truth.

“And, look, that truth will maybe -if we are lucky- feel good for like ten-seconds before more pain -from some other lie we’re unaware of- is heaped upon us. But, we -we- accept and embrace pain as our lot. We do not go around the pain, we go through it. We reach all the way down to Hell,” he said and watched their faces now in the sun. They squinted from the star so it was tougher for him to gauge their reaction with their faces reacting to the overpowering of this other source of light.

Jack One had raised and now lowered his hand as the trees’ shadows began to wave darkness over his eyes; dark enough to sooth them. And the concrete looked camouflaged in both shadow and light. Jack One felt chagrin, at his own lies; manifold and garish. He thought of how the truth might feel in his mouth; before it reached anyone’s ears as sound. He felt a femur bone in his hand; he felt the weight at the end as he swung it in his mind at the hated corvids in flight. A quote from Crowley entered immediately like a memory; the barking of a dog; the abjure from a mother to young son. A full page from a book of confessions appeared -unbidden- in his mind like a kite passed between bars: I want blasphemy, murder, rape, revolution, anything bad or good but strong. I want to go to prison or to the scaffold for the sake of the experience. This is the key note of my life, the untrammelled delight in every possibility of existence, potential or actual.

Jack One held it as his left hand pulled feathers from these imaginary birds. He didn’t believe any of that.

Jack Four felt the rebuke of facing things; he’d remembered his reveries and flights of fancy in the forest; his first of twelve they each had to take at the behest of Blax; they each had a list of things to accomplish before the end of 2037 and he saw his tasks like the imbricate plumage of the raven waterproofing the skin beneath. He knew each time they were sent into the forest they’d be damaged more and more. He thought of his joints and the soft parts of the face under the eyes.

Even now he refused to let that rebuke settle in. He was protected by such scales arranged like shields around him. He counted his exiles and saw he was at five of his twelve. A quote from Vertosick entered -as if his head was receiver to some transmission from above- his mind: Noise plays a large role in computer network models, and it figures prominently in all biological networks, too, as will be seen. In living systems, noise is a resource, not a liability. In fact, genetic noise drives the evolutionary process itself. It's impossible to come up with any new or original ideas in a black-or-white world devoid of uncertainty, since creativity lurks in life's grey areas.

Jack let the quote finish but immediately deflected it by thinking of other things; things that moved laterally in his mind like frames of a film, like each link of the chain in a final-drive of a motorcycle, like each wing-beat of the hummingbirds that flew around him as he often relieved himself -urinated- in the weeds and among the downed logs of *Juniper Pine* and *Birch* and *Oak*.

Jack Four thought of this and more as Blax abruptly dismissed them to their work; this being their lunch break and still a few hours of winter sun remained of the day. The garden needed tending, game and grains needed sealed, and the trucks needed oil changes and refueled. Their weapons needed cleaned and oiled and the optics calibrated; their gear needed repacked and inventory taken as well.

Blax knew they would think on it, and that their youth would attenuate their ability to sense just how deep the pain of loneliness could go. He had been insouciant to such things as a boy too. *Loneliness had almost nothing to do with whether there were people around or not*, Blax thought. *It takes age and wisdom to feel alone around people; to pay attention to what isn't said; to hear the note unplayed*, he thought as he reached for the face to feel the jaw under the beard. He felt he had plagiarized that last line; he rebuked himself by squeezing the hands into painful fists; each knuckle sent shocks and allowed him to feel that the bones disintegrated just a bit.

If one was not to be lonely in a crowd it had everything to do with the quality of those interactions; if one was to feel ok alone it was due to the originality of one's own thoughts.

The Jacks would come to see that later; *but right now*, Blax thought, *it was just an ephemeral quality, a hint, an adumbrated notion. And it would be even harder for them to get due to his style of rearing them and the presence of the other Jacks too* . He hoped they would never suffer the deep anomie that he had, but he also wanted them to understand it so as to connect with the deep and permanent loneliness that had beset the best sorts of people on earth. *The most moral, the most sensitive, the most decent, the most generous, the most intelligent and feeling of people were the ones who necessarily suffered the most.*

This was not philosophy, Blax thought, *it was deep beyond even the biology but into the math*. He tried again to build an equation where the Jacks could begin with truth, yet still receive pain -as prelude to enlightenment- but not so much as to ruin them. He tried to make that work.

Anyway, he thought, *this was true -of the most moral and decent- exactly because of their rarity, and this was, part of why Isaiah had made so many of them*. Blax thought it was so as to give them the one thing he had never had: support; valence with other men.

“Defense,” he said aloud.

The Jacks would understand each other and be able to give succor to their idiosyncratic feelings that no one on earth could. *Imagine being the only man with eyes in a world made ugly by the flailing and blind, and then to have men of such acuity as yourself dig in to make the world beautiful again* , he thought, *beautiful again in just the same way as you would* .

Blax looked down; down at the cracks in the *agogic* slab and the fabric of brown needles from the shedding pines. He looked passed the tears in the leather -at the steel-toe- of his own boots. His search for an equation had left him for now.

Imagine finally being a part of a group, a team, a tribe, a family; a family that didn't require lying and shallowness and bullshit just to belong. Imagine how sonorous the harmony to just such a song, he thought.

He felt a brief moment of envy; envy for the pain they would lack. They had one another, when he had no one; no one until it was too late. Blax pulled the folded paper from his pocket and -calling Jack over and handing

it to him- sent Jack Four on his next exile to the far canyon of *Rumethall* for eight-days.

The data from a new pain study loaded onto Jack's interface, which he assumed co-loaded onto the other Jacks: 151-million Americans -38% of the population- suffered from chronic pain in 2035; up from 18.8% in 2012, 20.4% -over 50-million- in 2016. And the pathways of social pain and physical pain were all mediated by the *dorso-anterior cingulate cortex* (dACC) and *interior insula* in both physical and social separation distress.

He thought of what Blax had said once when he asked about how it felt to be ripped off by his friends and family, to be betrayed by people he loved. Blax had just said one word, the only Laconic phrase he'd ever uttered that Jack could recall. "Lonely," Blax had said with a practiced smirk.

Jack took the order with eye-contact this time -his face still smooth and free of all but one small scar on the chin- but he refused to read the instructions while standing on the pad; instead he abruptly headed to his bunk -to retrieve his bug-out bag- he grazed his shoulder on the door jamb - misjudging his own width at the shoulder- and a sharp pain rain down to the elbow. The information on pain was like a splinter, a small thing that could easily be ignored among all the other data of their lives. He recalled the coder's outline of the specific neurons and brain hardware that processed social rejection and physical pain as one thing. He saw how much both *ennui* and chronic pain had increased in parallel and increasing lines.

But, his eyes and mind had already begun orienting to the next morning's red-rise in the east.

II. 2018 e.v.

Lyndon gazed at the wall; noticing the endless fractal branching combining with the stress fractures of the slab.

He was smiling at the memory of the warning he had been given as he was mixing the cement; the contractor imploring him not to put too much water in and not to seal it too quickly with the steel float; warning him of these very ruptures he was now so enamored by. He loved them, they were perfect, and his little anarchic plan -of course- had worked.

And he loved how even in the little things his tastes and need for metaphor confounded regular people; he felt he was in an elevated position, due to this need, not its execution.

He didn't mock them in his mind, he didn't demean them; he just knew that he was different and that it would always be a struggle to get people to understand him; and he was, for once, ok with that.

He had tried so hard to communicate this need; but his ways were too idiosyncratic -and conflicting- and the words would not be enough. And his thinking was too imagistic and inarticulate to inform his body's movements without making mistakes along the way that he couldn't even discern until many, many moves later. This too made him revel in these moments when small desires -small aesthetic desires- aligned with his mistakes vis-à-vis behavior that actually manifested the desired -but unarticulated- outcome. He liked it when he fucked up and it worked anyway.

He liked thinking someone up there liked him.

It was like his imagination made his intransigent error-flaunting seem fun, and his body made mistakes -on purpose- all because it knew that putative mistakes were what were needed to bring the grander aesthetic choice out into being. They call it self-sabotage, but they couldn't be more wrong. Self-sabotage was when you got along with your corrupt society, when you played fucking ball. His body knew what for which he truly was meant. Which is why it would break before it bent.

He was truly built for war. He was what DNA -mistake making DNA- would build once in a while. Gaia needed a man as fucked up as him for a reason. He was the rock in rock soup. He was the ambergris in the stomach of the whale. He was the man who strangled baby Hitler in the crib before anyone knew who Hitler was. He was the one that let the man everyone hated go free with a wink...

And only later, years later, would these little cracks manifest so perfectly, so wonderfully, so harmoniously for him, for his future self that only then -a hundred years hence- would each seemingly ugly fault articulate why this next level of fissure, and brachial cracking was so poignant and meaningful to him. He wouldn't know it was baby Hitler either, he'd just

feel like strangling a suspicious looking baby, and it would turn out he was right. He had no foresight; just instincts.

He wouldn't know why letting the worst of the worst escape the judgement of the herd was right either; he just would feel it in his weirdly shaped bones.

He of course extrapolated his next moves with that in mind; he knew somehow, he knew that his next move was a horrid catastrophe, but not due to any remorse about the people he would kill. That was not it.

He knew that these murders were justified and that he would never feel guilty or remorseful for it, as these were not mere commercial or economic murders; no, he thought, these were just mechanistic, natural, inevitable actions in an unjust and lenient society that needed a counterpoise to the refusal of the State to punish lying and perfidy and fraud.

That was not the issue. What was at stake was the potential for sloppy, unwanted mistakes; accidental collateral damage, unmeant, but occurring. He told himself he would guard against this vigilantly. He was also scared of how his behavior would harm the ontological good of the world, he wondered if maybe he was wrong, mistaken -deeply-beyond his ken; that even once in ten it wouldn't work out in the end. He worried that what he thought was wrong was right, and what he thought was right was wrong. He was burdened with 100% certainty in certain things, but 100% doubt in all things as a creed.

That bothered him. Was he making an error in moral logic? he asked himself. This was not a facile or vacuous issue; it was not cynical or cowardice; he was no Raskolnikov, and he was not nihilistic. He believed in order, he even felt he was doing God's work; the work the revanchist God or even the Jesus of Revelation would want done. There is no prohibition on man taking vengeance when called to do so; the solipsism, he thought, was not his, it was others when they abdicated their responsibility to do their duty.

He was merely what fell to what they made heavy. He just rain -hail- to their dark clouds.

The pet owner, *he thought* , who daily -non-invasively- failed to care for their animal, made necessary the vet's surgery; the scalpel.

" Inevitable," he said aloud inside the brain.

He was willing to do his duty vis-à-vis the meting out of justice; even when it redounded to his detriment. When the State fails, he surmised , the individual must act. This is the flip side of refusing to follow unjust, tyrannical orders from just such a State. The reverse -with perfect logic, perfect moral logic- was to take the law -take justice, take punitive action against evil-doers when the State was too lax, too liberal, too lenient- into one's own hands.

" Leniency spares the rod and spoils the child, spares the criminal, spoiling the society, spares the liar and spoils the truth," he said aloud but asleep -and thus- not into the ears.

This is not something that can be waved away with a hand; by telling a moral man to put his house in perfect order first before he can critique the world, no. If he, he thought , was critiquing the whole world then he would stay his own hand. But, he was merely making a judgment on 23 men; a precision targeting of the worst of the worst. He was not murdering innocents as revenge for some nebulous pain or broad sweeping claim against the order of things.

He was not warring against God nor mankind, he thought.

No, he was like a cop, a judge, a jury, all in one wave collapse; making a judgment call and doing it with justice, with care, with intelligence and without letting his anger leak out into innocents. This was crucial, and it mattered, and it absolved him not of guilt -for he would be guilty- but it absolved him of carelessness, of solipsism, of lack of discipline. It made him hit the mark, and thus not sin.

He would be the tribesmen, the individual, the cell within.

He could be guilty and yet not sin, this was an ontological nuance only one man in one-million would get, he thought as he lost focus on the cracks in the wall; a fuzziness of grey overcame his eyes.

It would be infinitely more difficult to carry these operations out without executing bystanders; witnesses.

He would be vulnerable for this moral choice that would not help him in any way with anyone; he would get no credit from anyone when dragged before the bar. No one would congratulate him on his forbearance, his sagacity, his charity to innocents, they would condemn him for his wickedness, his recklessness, his tyranny, his usurpation of the Law. He'd get no praise for the teeth unsunk in his nip, the blood undrawn among the drips.

He would be deemed a murderer only, regardless of his care to leave innocents alone.

This is the perfection of the thing, mirroring my fracturing wall, with the Author , my actual Father, he thought, engraved and encoded, descending through the generations, instantiated in my corpus now. If I am not the copestone to the Author's erection, if I'm not the keystone placed, maybe then I'm the lithe held by the crane.

No one would notice the beauty of the wall's cracks, they would see only the mistake of it; they would miss the harmony of embodied revelation, of error toward a better aesthetic, of absence of articulation of an imagination that used the error of body to synthesize something right. It was genius, not of him, not of his conscious self, but of his higher self, his self-untrammelled by his terrestrial language, his mere consciousness, his modern ways. For it was in the genome, the DNA, where all error was first -and most righteously- made. The genius of him was well below his personality, it was the stamp of the gods.

His thoughts would be wicked, his personality, horrid. But, his actions would be as good as gold.

It -he thought of this wall, this monolith, this monument & moment- was the Psychologist's return to the atavistic, a return to the values first learned around the cave and fire; a rediscovery of what is innate in our being: our loyalty to the God of Nature and the God beyond nature; the fog of God that instantiated in us an endless dew -an echo- of evolution; the hammer struck on the triangle -harmonizing through the least viscous fluid of time and space to vibrate sonorously, elegiacally- a black aria that shakes off the dust of father entombed and has him arise when the son returns to roll the stone away.

It was the gait of the wolves as they followed the crows; the forbearance of the corvids as the lupine licked all but the scraps of the ribs. The wolf heard helpful calls, the raven was left with a gift of open carcass, and God saw numbers and morality roll out like atoms in the breath of each thing with lungs; like vapor in each storm-sailor's song thus sung.

He looked upon the monolith and let words bloom like morning glories; briefly, redolently, piquantly. He took no note of the lack of birds; nor the total absence of dirt.

A return to rediscovered values, not made up as the *Philosopher* desired, but rediscovered, seeds re-vivified, *he thought -clarified- in these jangled words as he meditated on the portrait hewn in the grey mottled concrete he had framed -mixed, poured, troweled- and engraved and placed each embossed name and genomic code within. He had allowed the water feature to slick it wet each day, like a cataract -a waterfall-covering it until times when the wall would dry. And then, he thought, in these moments , the Author and his many messengers to his great, great-grandson, could stand before him with his own DNA , his own annihilation entombed inside his dark breast -a void embayed, at bay-and with his guidance, bring forth Goodness into the world.*

Oh father, he thought, my father, you have spoken to me, each line of that tale, each line sunk in that whale, threading through me like a boot lace, like sutures holding my guts together after this world has blown me apart.

This is the right sacrifice.

"The elimination of wicked men," he said aloud again as the ear-bones lay as still as those in graves. All this happened in the sequestered brain. He dreamt; he did not speak. The book spoke for him, it controlled the trenched parts of his ocean brain. He crawled up minarets at dusk, he prayed a thousand times a day, he covered his face, he obeyed.

The sacrifice of myself to the man who can spread thus our genome, our blueprint, our *codex* of God, to all four winds, to each of the four beasts, to re-populate the world, in our image, with our high moral conscience; our acute eyes.

We stand, half blind, half crippled, but multiplied by God to make up for these lacks with manifold acts, each of us a warrior for truth, beauty like spatter of blood and splinters of bone. We increase what is beautiful to include the formerly ugly, we bend ribs and make thrones, *he thought* .

“We subsume,” *he thought he said aloud.*

Man will know the arc, the travails, the mistakes, the errors, the moral catastrophes, the stupidity, the hypocrisy, the selfishness will all be remembered, instantiated on the bodies of how ever many God deems necessary to carry out his work. And man will have suffered and will suffer again, for a purpose, and without any acknowledgment.

My art, *he thought* , is ignored, reviled, held in contempt, my acts of justice will be seen equally without value, but they will be Good; they will be. I act when good men will not; I destroy evil as good men watch it proliferate. My twenty-three will be taken like half the chromosome from a man; just the part from one parent -the father- with such precision, such exactness, leaving the other half intact.

I will do this when others would have to kill the whole man, *he thought, he dreamt as the right hemisphere fired at 66%; the left in Broca’s area glowed when he thought he spoke.*

I seek to liberate man from the tyranny of immorality. What, *he asked in these unspoken thoughts* , hurts a man’s soul more than his choice to do wicked things; to lie, to betray his brother, his lover, his people? I can help end that with one sacrifice of me, so that my pieces may be used to make the world anew. I’ll take only the wicked half of man.

I am the perfect vessel for this, *he thought* . Because I’m willing to be mere shards.

“One of the most exquisite things is to serve the loved-one without his knowing it,” *she had said. The non-believer was the most honest and authentic angel to carry out God’s work, he thus agreed with her in every way and he felt buoyed by at least one other person who had also taken the opposite approach to God from the filthy -crass & cynical- wager of Pascal. He would not believe in mind but in action. He’d do the work of God and not say one word to the world of its origin.*

This was true religious love; and truth; and justice, *he added haughtily. He had more than spirit now, he had a mind commanded by God's most successful creatures, like the ants infected, like the virus compelled, like the whale returned to the sea. He had the inner voice from the written word.*

To serve unacknowledged: it lacked all the desire for redemption, salvation, personal bliss and reward of anything but condemnation and suffering all to bring about a better future for the self across time that while he had a responsibility to, he would - I will, he thought- not experience. All his future selves would not be available for his experiential awareness, but they would still Be in the Godly sense. They would Be that self-traversing all-time and all-struggle and all-versions of he; and of course, mankind itself -the species- would prosper with his manifold guidance.

He was certain of this in the dream. For the dream knew more and more, the way the sea covers more and more; as the land disappears; as the fluid rises, as the shore does sink.

They would be bound together.

He stared more at the dream's stele of the Melville line; he let the grey concrete lighten as it dried; he watched islands -archipelagos- appear. He watched the wetter mix remain black like northern seas. He then sprayed the dry spots down with the water he had made in the sun, distilled, and this re-darkened the cement so it did not dry too quickly, nor too soon. He worried for each part of this monolith, each crack, each whole; he felt his right hand pass the bottle to his left and wiped his brow of sweat and then he sprayed the wall again.

He was certain of this wall in the dream. For the dream knew more and more, he thought, repeating the dream , the way the sea covers more and more -and if God wanted- the sea could cover it all. His eyes saw the monolith's future maps; his dream saw olden terrain. He repeated what the dream had said; he used words that left a water-stain.

The eyes steadied and REM-sleep stopped. He slept beyond the narrative of the dream even as the grey light filled the bedroom; his body refused to

acknowledge yet the day. Yesterday the ravens had stayed at anchorage in the *Birch* and *Junipers* below and waited for sign and signal to alight.

Today he'd empty his magazines and reload them; today he'd check upon each bolt carrier group and each slide; today he'd write down each name on a list of just twenty-three. It was spring still, and he had many things to do.

What wolves were in him had empty ears and they waited for the blackbirds to sing out before they hunted his prey.

III. 2024 e.v.

"That's right just look at the screen and press the button in your right hand when you are ready for a new image," Isaiah said as inmate 74253351 sat in the chair of the lab.

"Ok," inmate 74253351 said in a slightly stilted manner, as if he was nervous. He was not nervous, he was curious. The white man conducting these tests was unique to him; he couldn't get a reading on him yet.

The images appeared on the screen. First was a black face, of a man, similar in age and hue and mien as this inmate. As he witnessed it, Isaiah read the inmate's *fMRI* data, his allostatic system's eight main functions, his respiration, endocrine function and *corticoglucoïd* levels in the blood.

He read *alpha-wave* function and the PGC in conjunction with the *mesolimbic* sections and compared them to each other -as the images rotated- and to his baseline gleaned from observation in the prison environment for the last twenty-one days. He had fitted him with a *nanobot* twenty-two days ago when he first came in under the aegis of need for blood work, serum samples; the part of the program to see if the psychopathy protocol could move forward with additional patients.

These battery of tests were proscribed by the charter of the PraXis corporation and the new law that the legislature passed six months ago. All this was by-the-book; in letter if not spirit.

This inmate was a black male, 5-foot-11-inches, 198lbs, with baseline cognition at .07, or a 124-IQ, and testosterone at 659; free-T at 303. He was thirty-three-years-old and had been incarcerated for four years; due for release in 2044; in twenty-years. He came from a single mother household,

in Aurora Colorado; he had one living brother and a sister who had died at age three.

He had been convicted of armed robbery and sentenced to twenty-five-years to life. He had no major infractions of BOP policy and was currently getting his GED. He was in the top 1% of prison inmates for cognitive capacity -measured both by Wechsler IQ and neural propagation speeds- and he was being measured for augmentation of both conductivity and oxygenation.

If successful both would increase his IQ by up to 9-points.

He was also a candidate for *MAO-A* short-chain *allele* removal and substitution through the CRISPR cas9/13 vector they had built, and for re-socialization over the next thirty-six months.

Isaiah thought that with the increased IQ -reaching a 133- this inmate could be a good candidate for the program. However, he wanted to do a co-terminal study of his attitudes toward his own racial group and other racial groups first in order to build a portfolio for a larger longitudinal study of racial attitudes, cognition and the mindset of the anti-social human.

Isaiah loaded all the contents of the study's folder -*PopDat222*- onto the cloud as he removed from his interface.

"Am I doing this right, man?" the black inmate asked as he pressed the button again as the white female face lingered on the screen.

"Yes, Darrel, perfect," Isaiah said as he measured the increase in testosterone at the sight of the white female face, and the suppression of vasopressin and lowering of heart rate to 55 from a baseline of 59. The *ventro-medial* region of both hemispheres cooled from lower electrical activity and the *amygdala* went from orange, to yellow, to blue on the screen to the left of Isaiah; the *nanobot* screen just behind the inmate.

Each face built a profile as the central nervous, endocrine and respiratory system all waxed and waned and the *galvanic skin conductance* was read by the button the inmate held. This went on for twenty-eight minutes, a threshold Isaiah had determined from the inmate's blood sugar levels; he then tagged the file as *unsearchable* in the *PraXis* cloud.

It was like watching an animal breathe -heat up, cool down, dream- as each brain region lit up and relaxed, as T-levels and immune function and heart rate rose and fell. The immune response was fascinating, as Isaiah saw something he had not planned for at all: the faces were of real people; all inmates in the DOC. Isaiah had used the photo files from the prison. They had *carte blanche* due to the program's high priority.

He noticed an idiopathic variance of immune response; white-cell *anti-body* production and caloric expenditure by that metabolic source. He cross checked metrics of each face beyond race and gender, and age. He began diving into their medical records and noticed something as obvious as it was previously unseen: the inmates with STDs -latent or untreated- were detectable merely from image, but with a small degree of change. It was barely perceptible, like a *tic* almost, not a full-throated declaration of the immune system.

Darrel was sensing infection subconsciously.

It was such a slight fluctuation that Isaiah wanted to do live tests now. He needed to get these other inmates -and their faces- in the room in order to see the phenomenon more clearly. He had the guard take inmate 74253351 away. He began sending the inquiries throughout the right channels and commenced collating the data he had already collected; this immune-response would be an ancillary project. For now Isaiah had nineteen inmates' data to pore over *vis-à-vis* racial and gender attitudes; and with the various permutations and cross-checking he'd likely need two hours to publish a comprehensive report.

The data flowed as it always did: in waves, with surface tension, pelagic layers and those lower down; the churning of data causing colder water to sink and warmer to rise, data isolated to stand out, then aggregated to create landscapes, and thesis, antithesis, and synthesis to congeal.

He would run this same series of tests eight more times with the same inmates and new ones, and the data was fairly clear: black inmates had malice and predatory loss-of-affect toward white faces and white females especially; which correlated to black on white crime and black-male on white-female assault and rape rates.

He thought briefly that this might be built right into the genes of blacks going back five-hundred or a thousand years; which allowed for black slavers -*Moorish* slave masters- to more easily abuse white females -*Norse-Scot* slaves- under their charge during the period of white slavery by black Muslims. *From roughly 800 to 1300 e.v., he thought as time stamp to his theory. Racial animus, racism would be selected for via sexual selection: over five-hundred years blacks with a conscience for the outgroup would rape white women less and produce less offspring. Just, he added, as white slave holders in the 18th and 19th century in the American south with more conscience -or revulsion- would breed less with their African slaves .*

Thus, those that bred with their slaves, Isaiah thought, well, their offspring too would have the DNA to be more congenitally racist in attitude; more outgroup aware; less racially obtuse.

Isaiah had -weeks ago- sent out *nanobots* to dig up bones in the *Mongolian* desert and along the Mediterranean of Spain; he loaded up their report but tabled it for now and pressed on with his current analysis.

The numbers alone were staggering. Black men raped white women at an astounding rate. Over 34% of the total rapes against that cohort -white women- were committed by black men. Less than 4% of the US population -i.e., black males over age thirteen- thus, committed one out of every three rapes of white women, the data showed. *And, Isaiah saw, black men committed the same percentage of the total violent crimes against white men to wit: assault, murder, kidnapping , inter alia.*

Hispanic inmates committed crimes against whites at a rate commensurate with their own demographic numbers -not white numbers- thus, black inmates were the only ones with disproportionate numbers targeting the white population. The assertion -made by some social scientists Isaiah read in the literature- that merely because there were more whites among the US population and *that is why* blacks targeted them more often did not hold up when the Asian, Hispanic and Indian perpetrator numbers were compared side by side. Only black men raped white women at a higher rate than their own population numbers; no other non-white race targeted whites like that.

The data was clear.

Black men were -at the level of the brain- perceiving white women as prey animals like doe, and white men as potentially dangerous prey animals like bear or wolves. But white people were not seen as peers -or even human- to black inmates in over 97% of cases.

And Isaiah had not yet closely looked at anti-social crimes that were non-violent, like fraud, robbery and burglary. He did a cursory check of the numbers and it showed the same dynamic: blacks were six to ten-times more likely to target a white person for defrauding than another black or member of another race.

Isaiah began thinking and allowing analogies to populate his head.

Inmate 16180339 had told him a story of a bear coming obsequiously to his domicile one day in some kind of distress. The inmate had told of how he -the inmate- was initially scared, and thus had grabbed his forty-five which was at hand. The inmate then stated that then he then felt a wave of empathy for the animal, as it seemed to be laboring to walk and that it seemed odd as it was rare that they appear in the daytime at all.

But, the inmate had said, his feelings began to change as the animal got closer to him; even though its -the black bear's- affect was unchanged. The largeness of it -the concomitant capacity for damage- increased in the inmate's mind, and its low probability of attack or the nuance of its behavior receded as relevant in inmate 16180339's mind as it got within two meters. The 365-pound *Ursus americanus* was breathing heavy and snorting and bowing its head like a guilty dog, and the inmate -he self-reported- was filled with disgust, anger, and a flood of desire to kill it. And Isaiah knew this had banished -metabolically- any empathy the inmate had once -previously, discernably- felt.

Anyone who talked about racism without appending metabolic brain states was a fucking moron, Isaiah thought.

The inmate had shot it three times with the large-caliber pistol and dropped -he reported- "*the brown bear right there.*" Although -Isaiah amended in the report- the brown color of the hair and hide was actually not an indication of its subspecies; for it was, in fact, a black bear. However, the inmate stated that it had collapsed right there -as it tried to turn to the left, and about-face- and it had fallen in its own footprint a mere five feet away.

The inmate had -as the bear twitched- put one more round into its skull, from three inches way, and then walked to the garage and got the reticulating saw to cut off its head.

Isaiah had read the inmate's brain functions and allostatic system as he recounted the story and saw the rise and fall -the fluctuation- of brain modules and respiration and neuroimaging and *glutico-cortical* levels.

Isaiah had run the exact same tests as he had for the inmates of African descent.

The data, Isaiah thought, would need to be cross referenced with a control study of non-criminals, and of at least five population groups -aka other races- in order to get a more methodologically sound study, but the data so far seemed to point to two things . Isaiah ruminated over these things as the algorithms operated in the background of his mind and the PraXis cloud.

The inmate was indeed ambivalent about the bear; but most blacks were not ambivalent at all about whites. Both members of the study -blacks and inmate 16180339- would prey upon the beasts of which they were disgusted and frightened. The inmate hesitated slightly longer in the case of the bear -than his own human victims, 90% of which were white- but the African American inmates would not hesitate at all to prey on whites.

When racism is a factor in political discussions, the specter of what whites feel about blacks is monolithically discussed, Isaiah noted from the meta-data. *What blacks feel towards whites is not mentioned or is discounted as irrelevant; to wit: 'blacks have no power, so they can be bigoted but not racist,' is the standard line ,* Isaiah recapitulated from the cultural data. All this was uploaded onto the report. He also added an article from the paper-of-record that showed blacks' attitude towards whites; he retrieved and appended an article in the *New York Times* by *Ekow Yankah* from 2019:

I will teach my [black] boys the lesson generations old. I will teach them to be cautious... suspicious. And I will teach them to distrust. I will teach my boys to have profound doubts that friendship with white people is even possible This was the thing both ubiquitous and undiscussed: American blacks' near universal attitude of mistrust of American whites. But, while generations old, as *Yankah* said, it was merely the generations of last four-hundred years among a thousand years in which the lesson

was reversed. It explained black on white crime due to mindset, genes, and historical record, but it left off the previous six-hundred to eight-hundred years before Plymouth Rock in which blacks held white slaves from Scotland and thus the very people would run the southern American colonies and then states.

Racism, Isaiah thought as he let the data run, was always hitched to discussions of power. Black could not be racist -the saying went- for they had no power.

Isaiah saw that blacks had plenty of power in the 17,890 murders against whites in 2024, and the 48,601 rapes of white women. *They suffered no lack of agency or power in those cases. And the 1.7 million cases of robbery, fraud and burglary, against whites also showed quite a bit of power in the hands of African Americans* , he thought. *Like the limping -obsequious-bear, wounded and sick and unprepared, whites were approaching predatory blacks and getting four shots to the head,* Isaiah recapitulated the story enlarging it to fit the data on race and crime as numbers filled in each gap in narrative.

And yet, all-the-while, the inmate told the story as if the bear's mindset was what was relevant, and not his own.

The culture did the same.

Whites kept thinking it was *their* -like the bear's- mindset that was the one dubious and needing adjusted; and not African-American's. And this is why they were going to keep being taken advantage of by blacks; who they kept -like that once limping bear who approached the inmate with no aggression at all- trying to make friends with. Whites -like the black bear- were trying to make friends with someone who neither liked them, trusted them, or felt safe around them.

The problem was with whites, Isaiah determined. They were too obsequious, too naïve, and too obtuse to get that they were being hunted by blacks and thus were stupidly walking up to them -like the black bear at Lot 45- as if it was their own white manners that would be the relevant factor on what became of them.

The bear had been calm, submissive, decent; and he had still been shot to death.

The bear likely would not have harmed the inmate, even he -the inmate- would admit that. But, even a 1% chance was too much to risk, and as blacks could easily surmise after four-hundred years of enslavement and torture and maltreatment by whites, they were no longer in a place - emotionally, at the level of the *limbic* system- to take that risk. Whites may be nice as pie now, but the mindset of the hunted predator had taken over years ago, as blacks had finally had enough of the bullshit handed down to them from the white majority.

And any blacks willing to see whites as worthy of empathy had been removed from the gene pool long ago. Almost all African-Americans in the modern age were the result of breeding by wised-up blacks who were suspicious and angry and full of hatred for the white man.

Just as whites got liberal and nice and non-racist , Isaiah concluded from the data post-1964, blacks had turned the corner to become unforgiving and predatory. Whites were ultimately: too late.

It was almost funny, Isaiah thought. But, there was no turning it back now, as the white majority was too *naïve* to convince with logic or statistics. Their feelings didn't care about the facts. Further, the black population was either too sociopathic or consumed with its *whites-as-out-group* mindset - too entrenched metabolically and philosophically- and thus too committed to this vector, to change with mere words.

The two groups would see no reconciliation or stabilization - via pushback- any time soon , Isaiah thought.

If whites would reassert themselves it would tamp down the emboldened predatory nature of modern -sexually-selected- blacks, but until then, blacks would only increase their aggression and add to the numbers of white victims . Isaiah felt that a threshold of -shit-taking by whites- would be reached in 2028 if the media was honest about the data -and thus whites could see how they were being targeted- or that threshold would be reached by 2038 if the media continued to lie about black on white crime stats and thus forcing the white population to more slowly become cognizant -

heuristically and through word of mouth- of the real danger posed by blacks.

So, 2038 e.v. it is , Isaiah said to himself as he thought of the increasingly dishonest mainstream media who pushed the anti-white agenda more each year.

He looked at the database for media reports from the major networks and the major cable outlets and major newspapers and journals, and 81% of the stories fit the *black-as-victim* narrative, and *white-as-aggressor* narrative, even as the data showed this was true only 13% of the time. And the obverse, the *black-as-aggressor* description was only reported 5% of the time -14% being other races or no race mentioned- even though in reality the black on white crime rate was over 51%.

This was not something he was willing to attribute to Jewish ownership of the media yet. There were too many other factors like political bias and temperamental bias of the editorial managers and furthermore -from what Isaiah could glean- *anti-black* feeling among Jews was almost 77%; Jews were one of the most anti-black ethnic groups on the planet.

And thus, it was too complex to make a decision on yet, Isaiah thought.

Humans ran studies of a year or two; a decade at most; fifty years was the height of conservative science. Isaiah could run thousands of years' worth of data in an afternoon; and so he was more cautious until he had exactly that.

Although all populations hated blacks the most -more than any other ethnic group- Jews were tied with Asians for *anti-black* racial animus. So, *unless the media Jews had a larger plan -that deviated from their personal feelings against African-Americans- it seemed odd that this would be the operational factor for media bias in favor of black Americans* , Isaiah tabulated.

He felt confused as the numbers ran to the tenth decimal place and out to 768 of the common era.

He ran more and more data through his mind, sifting and collating and cross-checking. But the reality was white audiences -consumers of media- were fleeing the major media outlets and landing at non-traditional sources;

so, audience demographics was -at 55%- likely the cause for anti-white bias in the media now, Isaiah determined as he saw a feedback -reinforcing-loop. The audience was made up of whites with discernable xenophilia bias, white guilt and liberal bias at 61%; then blacks, at 15% of total Nielsen numbers; then browns, at 19%; and finally 5% labeled as *other*, which included traditional white audiences; *what might be labeled center-right humans who watched what they hated as recon or due to some masochistic need to be insulted*, Isaiah thought.

That seemed more likely the cause to Isaiah. Whites were fleeing the media -like they had fled the cities in the sixties and seventies- and the ones staying with the mainstream news were *ok* with the anti-white bias; they were made up of masochists and people with trait openness -and a marked political liberalism- which allowed them to be slighted and not turn away.

But overall audience -those that paid any attention to corporate media- was down to less than 27% of the total population of the country; down from 88% in 1960.

An algorithm he had built to handle the data from the Mediterranean and North African *bots'* reconnaissance mission along the human genome project had pinged him with a series of data. He allowed it to give its report as he de-prioritized the media problem: The *M222 DNA* markers of *Scots* and the *S145* of the Irish were located in southern Spain and Morocco amongst burial mounds of African and *Moorish* tribes. These were children of slaves; *Picti* and *Scoti* slaves sold by Vikings to the black Muslims of the 8th through late 13th century.

Isaiah let the data -in complete form- wash over him and he thought of the ownership of fair-skinned slaves. It was well documented long before Jefferson sent the first US Marines to *Tripoli* to end the practice of Moors kidnapping and enslaving British and American sailors & whalemens.

But, the practice of black slavers owning whites for over five-hundred years was now available in the *DNA* records of the regions that Isaiah's algorithms had dug up. The algorithm laid out gene *J1b1* next, the marker from the female *mtDNA* sequestered in the folder of the report but annealed to Moorish *alleles* taken from the region today. The rape of Scottish slave

women -mere girls- by black Muslim slavers was instantiated in the extant genome.

It glowed and pulsed like a heart set aflame and Isaiah placed it next to millions of bits of data itself like rib and clavicle bones.

Scottish slave women gave birth to their slaver's -their oppressor's- scions as was evidenced by the current regional *DNA*. The *mullato* issue -from *sacatra* to *mele-sang* - was evidence -human data- of this crime; and not the crime everyone suspected: the crime of 19th century white slavers siring children from black slaves, but -in fact- the inverse from centuries before. Isaiah saw revenge in the *Scot* blood being transported on the ships that ran from the isle to America like a subconscious awareness of disease one saw in the faces of those infected with STDs. *Scot* Americans -southern men- had five-hundred years of memories of slavery at the hands of black Africans built into their genomes before one confederate soldier fired one ball from his musket or took his knife to one Union soldier.

It was subconscious, it was deep, it was unknown to all but the lizard and chimp brain.

And the English were seen in the subconscious minds of the *Scot* diaspora as oppressors from the coast of the isle in 987 e.v to the halls of congress in 1860 of this same vulgar age. The *Scot* felt beset on all sides by the black and the Brit deep in his *amygdala* and *basal* zones.

Racial revenge was built hundreds of years before history supposedly began. Southern slavery was payback and nobody -not one person- knew it, except those that built the south on the backs of former perpetrators -and their progeny- turned into victims at last. Nobody knew this but they and Isaiah who had access to the data heretofore unknown.

Isaiah saw that it -the institution of black Muslim enslavement of Scots - literally lasted over a hundred years longer than the famous east-west slave trade of Africans manacled by European and American -southern and thus Scottish- whites. He smiled grimly at the old iron coin he flipped over and over in his head and wondered how much to share and with whom. *Who would even care? Who had the brains and the depth of soul to even see how things truly were?* he asked himself as more and more data piled up in his head and in the PraXis cloud.

What were most Americans even watching, or reading or listening to now ? Isaiah then wondered as his analysis of the media again took precedence on his interface and the DNA *bot* fluttered away with new instructions to dig. He began a deep media dive -searching out all the ancillary, marginal and taboo news sources- and a picture began to appear.

Isaiah had -as he worked on all that was before him- delayed the memetic data from Blax for eleven-hours but, now that he felt he could deal with it, he let Blax's thoughts from the last twenty-five-hours stream in. Isaiah noticed key words that populated Blax's mind in his incessant discursive cogitation that Isaiah had learned to see as indication of Blax's redlining of soul. He then he took note of the roil of Blax's emotional load, and finally the complete text of his internal monologues appeared like chalk -on his equation laden blackboard- with symbols for zeros and ones and all that infinity that lies in between.

Isaiah then formulated a response -like an antibiotic or chemical rejoinder to out-of-parameter allostatic loads- to the man out in the wilderness and his latest round of ambivalences and wayward digressions from the task. Isaiah knew it was nearly time to deliver the girl-child to him, for both he as anchor to her and to her as rudder for him; and for manifold thing for Isaiah himself, of course. He didn't ruminate on the role of such a thing in his own plans; he just glossed over it the way the mind does when it knows a thousand unutterable things it must do to accomplish just one that it can articulate.

The mind does not focus on each discrete move as the body runs up the stairs. One merely sees the top and does not stop until their last footfall reaches the landing or the hall.

He scanned the mansion in Denver to lay an eye on the black-headed child as she bumbled around the vanity of her mother and the noises of the home echoed off one another as much as off the furniture of the rooms. He uploaded the child's CNS data and saw she had passed the *Westermarck* phase, and also begun *MHC* gene activation three days prior.

Isaiah uploaded the algorithm for her T-cell data next.

He guided Blax like the hand of some giant -a *Nephilim* - making way in the thick forest or blocking a path at a once passable stream; pressing down

like dark clouds; uplifting like springs at center of small ponds or bottom of deep quarry pools. He loaded Blax up with *amygdaloid biochems* and right hemisphere whispers like the break in the clouds that let the sun dazzle the eyes and cause the lids to blink in rapid threes and at the horizon's cast shadow -from mountain upon the ground- before the man in desperate need of such ragged signs.

14.6 King of Man and the Isles

Godred the Black; King of Man and the Isles Reginald [†] Olaf the Black

Godred Donn Harald Leod

Transactions of the Gaelic Society of Inverness; Vol LI [Clan MacLeod Societies]

Woe to the inhabitants of the earth, and of the sea: for the Devil is come down unto you, having great wrath, because he knows he hath but a short time Revelation XII: XII [King James Bible]

So do I write and color the runes Ljóðatal; 12th song; Hávanmál [Óðinn]

I. 2039 e.v.

He stood on the shore of the black lake and let the water -from the waves of the working dogs- lap upon his feet.

He was barefoot more and more these days and he felt it as both failure and success. The failure was obvious: he had given up on the world; on treading out and down. The success was in seeing this as precursor to the next phase.

It was not lost on him that his feet had gotten tougher too.

He had dreamt again last night of the man in jail. He had awoken in the bed; the bunk. He had seen Todd, restored. He had felt at peace with the grey walls and the absence of Valance. He had felt *ok* about the child, as if his absence was the thing that protected the babe. It was everything he was against: the abandonment of wife and child; the leaving of the tribe.

But, somehow he knew it what actually provided for them; and he had to trust he'd never know why.

His feet were thus bare, and the water brought silt and sand from the black beach of the lake he had built that now held a million cubic feet of water,

and the sink for CO² and the graves for each idea he had no room for anymore.

Blax let the dogs play and muddy the waters and he felt the new home - larger and empty of all but his bride and their child- behind him like a cell; and he knew he meant that in both ways: the individual unit, and the cage. And he had no energy to even raise the corners of the mouth, even as the mind smiled at the way he couldn't escape these goddamn metaphors up and down the ladder of each of three ontological domains.

And the ladder itself was the fourth , he thought then as the water again lapped at his feet and the dogs shook; their coats looked spiked and piloerect and in awe of the lake he had built for no reason he could discern.

He held the *I-Ching* in his hand; the hand like a claw; the thumb and forefinger pinched at hexagram 41 and 7: Multitude. Where there is contention, a multitude is sure to arise. Multitude, Steadfast and upright. For a person of noble spirit, No Fault. Persistence is for righteousness, to persist to bring peace to the world. Firm and central. Taking the risk of dangerous action, He maintains public order; What mistakes should there be?

Water contained under earth.

Sun Decreasing. Losing, damaging. Mountain above; Lake below. Evaporation of lake precipitates on the mountain. Being sincere and Truthful. Steadfast, upright. No fault. To decrease what is lower, to increase what is above.

II. 2040 e.v.

MO watched the lab dissolve into weather.

He let the *nanobots* cut a small fissure in his neck at the dorsal horn and the steady-state chip was carried across the room just below the freezing rain. It traveled between and betwixt each white grain, each coldest grain, each word from above.

Steven was quiet; his eyes occluded by the unmarked chaos; his left hemisphere made no map of the terrain. He was witness to something all of mankind would lament; that which no man would ever understand.

MO accessed each satellite as a fly with one million eyes. He saw *Lyngvi* in *Chaluim Chille* , facing the abbey with the clan-women prostrate -their children like ovum under their breasts and bellies- and the men on one knee by the olive-drab rocks carved by the *blackjocks* in letters in Latin and English and covered in moss and lichen and the droppings of birds.

From the *Rèilig Odhrain* Jack stood with the black *Eihwaz* from Isaiah in his left hand; proud shoulders; but head bowed just under the wind. The three *F îosaiche* faced outward from the *Domnaill* as he spoke and the words were raised in unequal divisions by the gusts; lowered by the first rocks of the *Hagal* .

Satan which deceiveth the whole world was cast out unto the earth and his angels were cast out with him.

Jack Four said this in octaves with sympathies of their own hummings as the whole of *Wolf Clan* were encircled by fires from the south. The flames sent smoke as emissary, ember as sentinel, and gale as warning to all.

In the lab, Isaiah lay upon the ground buried in hail; the cicada in the corners of the ceiling above all that had fallen and landed and covered like a veil.

III. 2040 e.v.

The land was feral; and each longhouse, garden, container, train car, bunker, and encampment of the four Jacks -and their clans- were abandoned. He could tell by the radio-carbon dating that they had left just under seven weeks from the blast that had raised him -them all- from the ground.

He saw that all were gone; but he knew that *Wolf Clan* -the one he sought- had left and travelled by ship across the sea. Sgt. Harvey walked up to him - at his six- on the prow of the land he had not seen in many many days. But days felt like movements -space- not time; time was something he knew he was beginning to lose. The snow was thin up here in the sun, and his brow felt warm too.

“LT, what’s the plan?” Harv asked as he placed his hand -blonde hairs cleaned of the lake mud, the cut on his flank now a healed scar- upon his Lt’s shoulder. Sgt. Harvey was naked but for the underclothes, straight-

laced boots, and his LBE; unarmed except his carbine, fixed blade *Kodachi* sheathed on his back, and knowledge of everything going back to the Y in the branch 7.14 million years ago.

Chen, Bugzy, and the child stood back and faced west toward the rise of the smoke from their former home; their sidearms holstered; clothes singed at the edge; their load-bearing-equipment burdened with 30-round magazines, MREs and potable water in packets of grey; small cuts and contusions already healed so they looked as mere smudges of once purple bruise.

Helen and Gregg knelt by the scrub oak and foraged for *basidiomycete* mushrooms that they'd crush later into pellets for the tribe; they collected snow for the boil; their fingers black from the soot; their nails broken from grips they had held before the blast. Gabriel and Celina built a fire from *Pinon* and *Aspen* ; their five children gathered more firewood from the miles of blast scatter. Todd and the other thirty crew members -garbed in grey compression clothing and armed with short-barreled carbines- pushed the perimeter out fifty meters to the northwest, west, southwest in a crescent as the clouds began to disintegrate into snow and grey particulates. Diffuse light was above.

Their concussions and broken bones were all mitigated by their PGCs - brain regions had been sequestered and blood clots dissolved- and their soreness alleviated by *mu-opioids* , androgens and caffeine released by the coders in intervals and quorum with the forty-five-member pack. They moved closer and the pain relief increased; they moved out the perimeter as they felt good enough to do so.

Their quorum sensing genes glowed and darkened inside the genome itself. Each A-G-T-C flickered like candle placed on rungs to an old mine ladder. Lyndon felt each of them at the level of their DNA; *it was nearly like a smell*, he thought, but didn't bother thinking it any more. He breathed through the nose.

"They've left," Lyndon said as the rest of the group watched him kneel.

He bent now -knees to the ground- and placed his left hand in the snow and let a wet imprint bury the paw up to the top where the scars ran in Xs, Ys and one Z. He saw a scratching in the slip rock -old- filled with sand and snow; but as he wiped it with his right hand -the hand pulling snow and grit

back toward him- he read the words the knife had carved right to left. Then -as he read the embossed words to himself- he saw a card -like the foxed and old linen style cards he'd left in the boots and pockets and as bookmarks in his prey- but now it was a dark grey card with a black Jack backstopped by three drilled and one broken bone. He reflexively felt -at the lobe- his left ear for the aperture and the brushed metal continuous ring and black bushing.

He saw the card. The man and the face was as clear as a hole within a memory; he heard a whisper as if from a dream and he said, "and we must pursue."

15. Right Up Until it's an Order These great
beasts, which are four in number, are four
kings who will arise from the earth Daniel
7:17 [King James Bible].

And maybe I'm wrong about my damn diagnosis, because what do I know? But I do have this proclivity to get to the bottom of things and what's at bottom of this is an ideological war or a philosophical war; it's even deeper than that, it might even be deeper than a philosophical war, which is something more like a metaphysical or theological war. It depends on how far down you look.

Lecture 1.1.15 [Peterson, Jordan]

Let four captains bear Hamlet like a soldier to the stage Hamlet
[Shakespeare, William]

I. 2036 e.v.

"Well, that's a good question, Jack," he looked at his chronometer, ignoring the atomic clock in his PGC, it was 19:47. "Paglia said that there was no woman Mozart because there was no female Jack the Ripper."

He let that sit. He let the light change and the air temperature fall and the ice settle in the glass.

"It never finds its own level for me. I'm like *the Author* that way: half corrupted and half sinless, half at war with God, half mad with hatred for Satan. I can neither believe nor not believe. I am as he was in 1851, on the line between chaos and order, between God and Satan, between the known and unknown. I fear this makes me most dangerous of all," he said and looked down at his boots; he saw the laces straight, the overhand knot at top; he felt the eyes of each Jack upon him.

These were the things a man was no supposed to say. A man was to pick sides. A man was to always feel he was good.

“See, the man of substance asks: what is more authentic, more real, more true: to follow one’s instincts or question them? It’s not such an easy thing to answer. The shallow man waves it away. The religious man has it both ways; picking and choosing which scripture to read. The modern man pretends he hasn’t heard the question at all.

“But it is a question. *Who moves this arm? Is it Ahab?* ” Blax asked and -in fact- rose his arm and the Jacks followed it with the eye.

“See, *the Author* knew that there is no answer to this; that man is trapped, between belief and unbelief and that God has made it so. He knows God has made it so -on purpose- either out of some requirement of the cosmos or from some wisdom that is opaque to man. And man is outraged at his own ignorance. Outraged.

“Man -and I think foolishly now; although I’ve spent sixty years being this fool- wants more and more knowledge, picked up as stones, as if this would provide him the weight -the ballast- he needed to sink to the ocean floor so from there he could observe all of His creation above from some bottom,” Blax again paused and felt his chest so tight -and belly in such roil- that he finally allowed his PGC to issue the necessary *biochems* to allay the anxiety. But when one waits until a system is so far out of balance the necessary corrective is itself now extreme. The *chems* he added hit him like meteor from way out in outer space.

He was loaded up with blues and cool hues of chemistry that lowered heart rate and changed *pH* in the blood and made his visual acuity reduce. He had four *mu-opioid* receptors flood and then an anti-emetic to countermand that shot of endogenous dope.

He felt calmer, but lower in his chair. He felt relaxed but the skin felt less of the air. He was less in pain, and thus less alive. He hated what he had just said and so he spoke more; as ballast.

“He -mankind- thought his place on the ship -on the surface of the sea- was too low to see to heaven, and yet too elevated to see the things of the ocean; the great mass of the world. See, he knew the watery part was two-thirds. Just like the brain, the *paleo-cortex* is two-thirds. You see?” Blax asked as Jack Three’s coder ran with each lateral thought in each direction like light from a lone -abandoned- star.

“I think so, yes,” Jack Three said. The coder began linking it all up, gathering each beam, each photon and bending it toward his mind’s eye.

“*The Author* knew this somehow, in his *sub-cortical* brain. He knew that the water -the sea- was analogous to the brain of man. And that, if *that* was true, then an additional thing -a third thing- was true: that God was two-thirds that same thing,” Blax said and poured more soda water into the glass, lifting it up as high as he had lifted the arm before; this time in offering to Jack. Jack declined.

“He,” Blax restarted, “was not all head like a watch; He was mostly heart, cold & jeweled and dark heart -ponderous heart- but heart; not all rational head. Just like the sloshing earth, and sloppy man and all else. And that meant that half of his diamond heart was Satan’s. Which made Satan one-third of the whole cosmos. For half of God is one-third his sea. If God is two-thirds bleak then half of that is one-third the total.

“Just as two-thirds of the earth is sharkish sea; wicked and cormorant and rapacious and does the eating and murdering of the world. But, we all forget it was all us soft beasts that grew out from these waters; climbed out and onto shore. We never look back far enough to see from whence we come,” Blax said this and knew his Jacks would -in fact- think of whence they came and so he nervously felt he ought to start up again.

But, first he thought of wasp males having no fathers, yet were each three-fourths brothers. He saw the word: *haploid* written across his thoughts like clouds forming shapes the mind turns into words and faces and epistles from God. And he dismissed it, thus, as fantasy and evidence of only his desire for evidence -any data- within the ever-expanding void.

“And two-thirds of man is wicked too,” Blax kept speaking, “two-thirds of mankind total, and two-thirds of each man individual. And half that is God’s dark and half Satan’s black. Think of that. That is not the common view. And from bad beginnings, false starts -from error made in first position- all that follows is itself wrong no matter how right it may be internally. I say this with no malice, almost no malice at all. But, God isn’t all nice and Satan all wrong, it isn’t like that. For even our highest ideal has mars, abrading marks, rot at the center somewhere deep; and even our worst fears have a bit of cheer.

“And we know this is true. We see our shadow on the ground and disappear back into us at midnight and too at noon. Locate your shadow at either midday or midnight. It’s gone from the ground; the world. It’s back home in you. Twice a day it is put away; and yet we think God is all good. It’s childish. If He was all good why would He birth Lucifer at all? He wanted evil in the world, He unfurled it, and nobody takes God seriously anymore. The ancients did, all those that came before *Job* took God seriously. I do. I do, as well.

“But, Lucifer was also the bringer of light, and the murderous oceans provide the war we need to regulate the sweet breezes, as most oxygen is made -not from the forest- but from the sea,” Blax said with a wink and took a drink of *champagne* colored fluid that was one third amber bourbon and two thirds ebullient water. He spoke without thinking; he let his lungs push out words his lower brain formed. He watched from above as each Jack tried to comprehend. Blax uttered numbers but understood hardly any math at all. It was fractions in which he spoke and this admitted that his understanding never even approached a whole figure.

“Is that true?” Jack Two asked. He was narrowing down all that to the bit about the ocean and the air.

“It is. The oceans -not the forest- make most the world’s oxygen to breathe and have none of it for themselves. And they achieve it through malice and murder and the deepest of unknowns. Man regulates the earth too; with his wars, that cleanse the land like forest fires, that themselves are set by God’s lightning strikes and human arsonists alike and there is a reason the French call it a *coup de foudre* .

“A bolt is *love* , and *love* is a deadly thing from beyond,” Blax said as his heart always dipped a little like a ship in port loaded from the pier. He thought of love and how it had wrecked him; but how it had made him too. He turned his pain around and stared at it as if it might be worth -this time- letting it slip out to sea.

He let memories of each thing love did have equal time for just a second or two. He tried to see which was dark as God and which was the penumbra of the fallen angel; he had no idea as each memory rolled like Jacob and the

angel; wings here and hands there; bodies in motion, sounds and potions and each girl refused to give up her full name or look him in the eye.

He nearly thought -but did not- of all the love he'd had and yet rejected; all the girls who loved him who he cast away. He gave no time to the brothers of such sisters who would want his head for making them hear the sobs of their kin in the days after Blax had moved on from girl to girl as if they were not somehow human too. He had memories sharp for wounds received, but dull for those he inflicted on others. He lacked the grudge others would hold for him.

His weapon had but one edge.

However, the universe made space for such enmity directed back at him; at the righteous man done wrong, but too -also- doing wrong in this diorama of God's mind. Blax was injured from attacks at his back, while he stabbed at those in front; and the world formed a dragon that ate its tail. He thought he didn't want the gold, but rather, the dragon -that the fight- was what he sought. He assured the world that he lamented that the dragon was already dead when he arrived; arrived to find all that tawdry guilt.

And so he used the bullion to war against impersonal things, God's enemies, not his own. Isaiah's foils never his own. And the gold kept multiplying as dragon after dragon was slain; and these wars -his promised payment- did not slake his greed.

If Blax was wise he'd have wondered where the room -the space- came from when his plotters schemed. He would have asked if there was a connection between things that he thought had no connection at all.

When his enemies made maps of how to reach his most vulnerable parts -he ought to have asked- from where did the place names come? How did they know the terrain? But the room -the space- made with clearing hands of God -the new game, on new board, set up to teach him how to lose- would just appear; and only God would know why; only God would see all the little crimes. Each revenge was an atom set in motion by the heat of vex, the roil of the slight, the turbulence of what was wrong when half-evil men thought they were always right.

Blax kept talking to Jack Three; but all the Jacks continued to listen as half a story was told; a tale of all dragons and no gold.

“And finally,” he began again, “God too is made up of Lucifer. He has that malice and mischief and murder in his heart. How could it be any other way? God flings off but still contains it all. *Consider the birds*, the Lord says, *ask the beasts, and let them teach you, or speak to the earth and let it reach you.*”

“*Job*,” Jack Four said as he now offered out his empty glass to be filled; unlike Jack Three, Four was in thirst. Blax pointed to the once clear -now heavy- bottle of dark bourbon with merely the three letters -JAX- painted on the side and to the *carafe* of clear water, back and forth it cracked and sloshed in the vessel. He waited -for the nod- to see which spirit -or fluid- Jack wanted in his own glass.

“That’s right, JF,” he said as Jack Four nodded sharply as Blax’s hand and finger hovered over the amber London glass, “and so we learn from the earth as one third of the crystal; the one of three. We look to the beasts and the earth, we look to man and his heart, and we look to the God of all things and His nature. We intuit God from the evidence of everything He left for us to see. We can make Him up from just Satan and his domain: here, the earth; here, the beasts; here, mankind.

“We reverse engineer Him from His works.

“They say you can build a word from just a few letters, a sentence from a few words, man’s mind does not need much more than a fraction of a thing to see -intuit- the whole. Study on that for a few. All we have is half or two-thirds the whole and yet from that we can see God. All His works are signature. From that we can see His hand,” Blax said as he showed off his palm -empty, riven, calloused- as if it too was connected to the full -unblemished- arm of God.

“They combine there. They combine like all similar things. Man makes his art as he is; sub-consciously. Man picks a mate that looks as he does, a dog even, that shares his phenome of traits,” he pointed to *Caius* his Malamute, who looked just like Blax, with the black and grey coat, mimicking his black beard with grey streaks; they each had a black widow’s peak and were heavy at chest, territorial, and working-class animals by nature. And neither

were as tough, martial, brutal as the Jacks and their GSDs with their all-black coats and total-war stances.

No shocks of accidents appeared to anyone who paid attention at all. So, *surprises always come*, Blax thought this applied to everyone but himself.

Caius and Blax were both genetically from the north; and closer to that first line of first of their kind. The Malamute closest to the wolf, and Blax closest to first man; he had -they all had- 4% Neanderthal DNA and were of a separate line from *Afric* man. The blackbirds were quiet in the tree line. Nobody wondered whence that bird came, no Jack asked about the name.

They smiled because it was true, and Jack One and Four had their own GSD's that looked as they did, all dark, monolithic, no white, no grey, no age. Callow still, but strong, and smart enough to be trained. Aggressive - more aggressive than Blax or *Caius* - and protective, and adventurous still. Courage: the use of anger to quell fear; it was metabolic and each of them knew it vaguely in the mind, and 100% in the body.

"God made the cosmos and earth and man and the beasts like Himself. Scattered diamonds with inner fractures, lapidary with flaws. Cloudy deep inside, like He is. He made Satan; He made a thing capable of rebellion, a thing guaranteed to buck and kick against the pricks. Nothing that smart follows orders," Blax said and they all let that notion -that implicit taunting- wash over them as if cleansing something else away; get their ears wet and chill their necks and make them rock a bit back and forth on their patch of ground.

Blax thought that the most beautiful woman he ever touched -and thus ever really saw- had a four-inch scar down her face. He thought of the *Elgin Marbles* with all their fissures and decrepitude. He recalled errors -in brief- of first edition books. He knew beauty was innately marred. He knew good was always tarred.

He thought being smart might not be so smart after all.

"But what an intelligent man chooses to rebel against, *ah*, that is entirely up to him. As a boy I rebelled against being raised by women. I instinctively knew it was wrong.

“As a youth I rebelled against school and parents. As a young man I rebelled against empire, against country and God, well, religion anyway. As a more wise man, an older man, I rebelled against the manichean, the simple black and white world. I saw nuance and greys at the edge of black and preceding white, I knew that rebellion against tyrants was loyalty to God, but that God himself was a tyrant too, and that sometimes man’s tyranny was just. This was hard, this took guts -if you’ll forgive the hubris- to see that not all freedom is good, and not all chaos as bad. I saw that God had a plan more complicated than my poor head could understand. I submitted to the rebellion of not knowing, to admit that I might be wrong. I rebelled against my own certainty,” he said but then hesitated. He thought he might say one more thing on that. But he demurred and moved on.

“How did this rebellion manifest? Well, I was willing to act on incomplete knowledge, to follow my balls into the fray. I was willing to be wrong, to be humiliated, to be shown to be a fool. That is rebellion to this reputation-guarding cowardice, this need to maintain face to the crowd. Fuck the crowd, let them hate me, as long as I am willing to stand for something, to risk it all, to do what means something not what is pragmatic. I was willing to take the hits for that life.

“I was rebelling against doing it right, always right, never being wrong. I said, *fuck that* . I was willing to experiment, make error, increase error in fact. Be wrong more and more, and thus discover some percentage of what’s right. The careful man, afraid to ever be wrong, he is *never* right: he is a tool of some other man, that is all he ever will be.

“I vowed to let Satan make one third of my decisions, just as God has agreed to let him give counsel that much. God and Satan worked together on *Job* , as you men will recall,” Blax nodded to Jack Four to give credit -again- for Jack’s remembrance of scripture earlier. “God’s favorite was Lucifer, never forget that. Never. Modern Christians make God into a one-dimensional eunuch, they strip Him of His balls. I do not; I say God is ruthless, bleak and black and capable and eager for great harm. God is an angry god; a vengeful god and He looks around at man with disgust.

“I take my cues from that. I say, if God can be dyspeptic with man then so can I. And I can point that same invigilating eye at myself; and I can be

disgusted with one-third of myself, too. But, one can never hate one's self *in toto* ; nor mankind; nor God. One must always rebel against the ugly, but not in the process -with one's anger and malice- thus, mar the beautiful too. One must never hate all of being, all of the world, or all of one's self.

“One must not rebuke God and turn away.

“This is what I learned from *the Author* , and from God himself. The modern Christian is all love and piety and unctuous blubber; like the rind of the Leviathan himself. But, there in the guts, the *ambergris* , the jewel of the dyspeptic viscera, a dram of that retrieved from the useless guts is worth a hundred barrels of the outer half. And the bones and the deep, deep heart of the whale. The harpoon never reaches the heart itself.

“God has a heart; man does too. But modern men ignore the heart of both; make God all like a watch, all head and thinking and rational and so-called good; right-reason and all that crap. Modern man has no idea what good is! He thinks being nice is good! Nice!” Blax was bellowing now and they sat rapt as the candles burned inside the containers and the fire burned in the concrete pit; the animal skins from their last hunt still hung on the chains and hook of the hoists on the H-beams, and the elk bones heated up as the flesh dripped; sweated off their fat.

Blax thought of the modern stoic, the mechanical man who took his own heart out and told other men to do the same. *They all forgot Seneca abandoned wealth. These fake stoics never knew the data on the limbic system at all. They made virtue of necessity: they were too cowardly to be alive, too craven to show heart, so they said they governed it for the greater good.*

“See, modern men do not take God seriously at all. People don't even believe at all; but have neither the balls or brains to admit they do not believe nor fully commit to belief then.

“They won't admit to their disbelief, but they also have no inner conscience necessary to do God's actual work, they only truly work for money and safety and calm and sucking up to the powerful and then going along with whatever society says is good. These are the least godly people, and yet would condemn me for my doubts. My doubts are one third, my belief is

two thirds, and I am honest to God about my doubts so as to not disrespect Him.

“But they are modern and secular 100% in their bodies and ways, but they pretend -feign- 100% belief, which is a total mockery of what is true and just and godly. They’re liars and thoroughly modern; and would never do the truly god-like thing if it even threatened to get them a fucking parking ticket; they are so afraid of upsetting daddy, the State. They worship the State, society, not God,” Blax said and drank deeply from his glass, as if it would douse his inner fire. His PGC prompted him to increase more relaxants, but he shooed it away like a horsefly.

The Jacks nodded and understood now something that was opaque before.

“You guys get it now? Does that make sense? I believe in God because look at what I value, look at how I live. I don’t store up treasures here on earth, I develop my soul instead. I don’t countenance evil by letting my daughter date around or let my son become weak and unmanly by letting him be raised by women. I raise my boys; and I saw to it that they were raised by men their whole lives.”

“But Tania was our teacher for years,” Jack Four said. He knew Tania hated him, he felt the way she took the long way ‘*round*’; the way she ignored his questions or gave perfunctory answers and moved hurriedly along. He was like all their genome: if he was not loved he’d make sure you hated him. He’d stand not for the middle way. Blax stared at JF and -briefly- hated him for this argument; this impertinence.

“Right, but was she *above* you, or was she your exemplar of the female to be protected? Did she instruct you or did men?” Blax asked with agitation.

“Well, she was our teacher but yeah, she only tried to be authority once and that didn’t work out so well,” Jack One said and the three of them smiled and let out noises of mirth just below actual laughter. Jack Two made the most noise; it rose to the level and cadence of a true laugh. He thought his laughter might protect the temperament of the night; he felt Jack Four had interrupted the mood with his accusation. He felt Jack could have -should have- phrased it as a question.

“Right, instead, she submitted to you, as still boys, and you didn’t abuse her, no, you adored her. And you protected her from then on. Right?” Blax asked.

“Right,” Jack Two quickly said. He had indeed loved her and knew that he still did; he allowed himself to think of all the times she had smiled at him, and the times her hand grazed him, the times she looked away nervously to hide her desire. Her face appeared but it melted into mist as he realized it was her ribcage he missed. He ran his fingers over her chest bones in his mind. He imagined inside her lungs iron coins and *letters of marque* he’d find.

“And who were your actual teachers? Who did you learn from with exercise and play and the classics and how to build things and take them apart,” Blax asked; he demanded they vindicate him now. The *agogic* fire popped as thick pine burned; his hands cracked at the knuckles as air escaped each empty space between both bone and log.

“We read the great men of history, and the great artists,” Jack Three said grandly. He thought of all those days they’d read and read as the winter sun came in through the windows and the light would occlude all but what was right in front; *haze like fog* , he thought. He remembered each word it seemed, each idea, each feeling inside him be built, or maybe cleared away. He remembered the first time he used paint on canvass and how his arms wanted to make wild strokes on larger things, he wanted to prime walls and use 4-inch brush heads like leviathan lashes, he had saw things in his mind he wanted to coat the world with. He saw the whitest greys appear in layers of heather like sedimentary rock, he saw each Jack as arms of a clock.

He heard Blax call out: *Time* .

“And we learned math and carpentry, basic carpentry,” Jack One midwifed and they nodded and smiled, “and tool handling and dye making from videos she showed us and with...” Jack had stopped mid-thought and now they all recalled the wrestling and rough housing at school, how their fathers had been brought in. Their PGCs linked thoughts like this.

They each remembered little things, of how their fathers had felt and behaved and been awkward in ways that made them turn away. Not one of them thought this might have been done on purpose to cleave them from

their families and hand them over to Blax in time. They saw two layers deep -horizon and firmament- and did not assume a third -lower- layer down. Hell was still -in their minds- far away.

“Our fathers taught us wrestling and basic things like that,” Jack One finally added.

Jack Four saw they -these other Jacks- couldn’t yet describe it -the whole that he felt he saw- and he began to link up each part of their education. He saw that Blax had seen to all of it now. He wondered what else was hidden from them in plain view. Once he suspected a third layer, he assumed there must be something below even that, an iron core, a ball, a thing that curved the earth, bent the bow, made a man conform to the shape of not just the globe, but the universe itself. *Was the cosmos less and less flat?* he asked inside his head that flexed at the jaw, flared at the nostril, and furrowed in his still almost smooth brow.

He felt ideas swarm him like wasps and yet saw no correlation from one eusocial species to the next; relatedness coefficients of wasp males and his brothers did not yet appear. But he smelled honey and heard buzzing and saw caterpillars and roaches move in strange ways after being stung.

“I’ve heard men say there was no golden age; but there was. But gold is merely noble, it ain’t some perfect thing. But to dismiss the ancients that way,” Blax just shook his head as if it -that movement- would be the second -concluding and sufficient- half to that aborted phrase.

“We have no history. No lineage. We’re all abandoned serfs off docked ships. And we don’t even think this matters. Southerners, Scots from the south, know nothing of our people; and this was by design. The English scattered us like a criminal breaks a revolver apart and throws each piece in a lake here, a river there. Down a chimney.

“My father. Well, his father was absent, he abandoned his boy, my father. So, he -my father- managed to be absent while being there; a ghost, a ghost is all he was,” Blax said as he thought of what he saw through in that man; ignoring the kisses his father had laid upon him that felt like flesh. He forgot the few -but real- times he had spent by his side. The ways Lee had tried -tentatively- to instruct were all wiped -thus- away. Blax too cleared

away all broken pieces of his past. Again, the memory worked only sharply when wounding him.

When life was soft, when treated well, when loved, it had no penetration to his mind. It bent outside of him. He forgot all those times. But his body recalled it all. And he never once thought this might be the source of his hesitation; his ambivalence.

Blax not once thought his lack of monomania might be evidence of something good. He called himself a coward and hid that part of himself as much as he could.

“One time I cut my knee and he got a wire brush, a wire fucking brush and said he was going to clean the wound with it; and I was four years old. I remember it to this day in full detail. It didn’t teach me toughness, it taught me malice. If he wanted me tough, he would explain how to be tough, how to think through pain. He would have explained it like I explain your own emotions to you, walk you through it like I do, yes?” he asked as his drink lay untouched in his glass, the container in his lap. The Jacks nodded and looked up and met his eyes.

“He would have said, *ok, give yourself twenty-seconds for tears, then stop, and then think of the benefit of pain, think of how it teaches you how to be in this world* . But, no he just gets a wire brush to scare me further; teach me nothing.

“It was cruel, and he laughed; and I never forgot it. And I see that part of him in me still to this day; I must overcome my penchant for cruelty, petty malice, sarcasm, passive-aggression. I have to overcome it in me, because he bequeathed it to me in the genes and the way he raised me. But I swore that you men would never be raised that way. You’d not be coddled, no; but you’d not be abused either. We’d walk the line between toughness and vulnerability, to embrace -to voluntarily embrace- that which makes us weak is what actually makes us strong.

“My father knew none of this; he knew only shallow things like stupid cruelty and craven silence when things didn’t go his way,” Blax paused briefly and remembered a grey autumnal day on the isle -all of an instant as if shot, broken off, from an asteroid belt; as if woken up from a unearthly dream- and he saw a black British cat had scratched him on the left hand.

He recalled the blood had appeared on the back of that hand -where the tattoo now lay- as if from behind drawn curtains. It was as if the blood was always there; and of course, it was. But now it would be -back then it had become- new blood; blood like land invaded by a stranger race, raiders, parasites, from beyond the sea of the skin, the boundary of a little boy who knew nothing of the world at all.

Blax thought nothing of the whiteness of the hail. He saw only the blackness of the cat, the redness of the blood.

He heard no words. So much data swarmed and deluged each Jack -from within and without- and they each caught what they could and yet missed almost all of it as it flew by or landed on the ground and melted into the soil.

The *toxoplasmosis* had been on the claws. The little boys' hands had taken it in, and a handshake deal between a parasite for aggression and the genome for it too had thus been arranged; the world nodded. It was an ancient pact between beast and man; and the math below and God above and the devil making angels in the snow.

God had arranged it. And man had ignored it, even as half the planet had it. And even Blax -with that parasitic aggression inside him- moved on now with his Jacks as if he was one gestalt thing; no automaton of such a small thing, from so long ago, so far away.

"But I am stunted, misshapen, and had to re-learn how to be a man myself. I had to re-create myself from my instincts, but you got the proper training from day one and learned how to respect females, protect them, revere them; but never submit to them for one second.

"But nobody -no modern fathers- do research on how to raise a boy; no modern father reads the research on what ADHD is or what using psycho-stimulants -methamphetamines- to regulate natural boy behavior does; instead they let them all watch TV. Do we even own a TV up here? No. But they act like TV and schools and drugs are required or unavoidable. That is the modern father. He is a failure as a man and a father and yet they all think they are above me. Above me! It's risible, enough to make a," Blax said as the Jacks interrupted in four voices as if from each direction of the earth.

“Cat laugh,” they all said to their own amusement as the flame of the fire warmed and lit up the high-part of the cheeks and far-edge of their hands.

Blax pressed on and ignored their common joke. They had wanted him to laugh with them, to soften -to ease up on these speeches and ventings and burstings- but he pressed on like a blade engaged with the flesh. He spoke as if he had to say it all now, as if he had no time, as if each word was his last, and they’d go on -have to go on- for a million years with only his instruction -whatever he could jam in right now- to help them.

He was motivated by this feeling of lack of time.

“Right. Anyway, I take God seriously, even when I doubt his existence, I take him seriously. I do not mock him. Mocking him would manifest in mocking His world, His creation, the way He designed man and woman.

“Mocking him would be to say, *I know better than the body’s impulses toward meaning and righteousness*. Mocking Him would mean that I let tyrants and lenient rulers alike ruin the world with their corrupt ways and not say a word just because I get paid and laid; just because I get to have all the material shit I want,” Blax just then insinuated instinct was God and conscience thus, the devil. He made manichean his own heart, he listened to each but called one *wise -father* and one -the other- *craven -brother* and he felt badly for having conscience at all.

He felt crazy for this thing -these things- inside. He didn’t realize how confusing he was to others as he took each side.

“That is the modern man, he just looks around at his house and cars and shit -and how he never has to fight for anything anymore, how easy and safe his little life is- and thinks, *it’s oh, so grand*. But, that is mocking God. All men do it now. Bragging about how great the West is? Bragging about its wealth is mocking God; and I believe that,” Blax said with rising contempt but a descending doubt in half of what he said. Three Jacks felt confused, *for what -if not the West- were they doing all this? Was it not the West that was to be defended?* they nearly all thought as they then nervously felt they might have missed something.

They assumed it was they that missed something, not that Blax was contradicting himself.

They ignored -on their own bodies- the small scars that keloided and empurpled; they did not exactly recall the weird stingers when their own joints were twisted; they blacked out the days out in the high desert they'd been left alone during their training; they forgot the fights between them that made them hurt inside from each punch thrown twice as much as each one received. But they merely thought *why, if the West was not their bulwark -and kingdom- then what was?*

But, Jack Four felt no confusion. He watched the lumber and bones in the concrete fire-box pocked with skulls and clouded with soot, stuffed with cut wood at the edge, filled with obelisks of organic shit. He watched it in his mind like vision turned inward; he watched it all burn.

Jack Four felt himself grow and fill up space.

And maybe , Jack Four thought, that paradise will have its own ruin as seed. And this too is good, for God knows that the tumult, the disorder, the entropy is all necessary for a healthy cosmos, and that free-will -the chaos in man, the option in the arch angels- is needed by the spiral of the cones-of-Marduk to unfurl.

"They trespass, authors to themselves in all ; Authors to themselves in all ," Jack Four then said as release to his held breath. He paused and let those words hang in the air like smoke on this side of the fireplace. He felt a dousing water behind the eyes, but he snuffed it out as he finished his whisky -antidote to tears- and rose and -with his cigar short and close to his face, red in waves as he breathed in and out- he silently -but heavily- climbed the stairs to his berth.

Blax thought a bit of Jack's words -Milton's words- and then asked, "you know how many angels followed Lucifer into battle with God?"

The remaining Jacks did not know and shook their heads, and he answered it had been exactly *one third*.

"Did that mean the two-thirds of the angels that stayed with God were the paleo-cortical mass? The sub-cortical desiderata? Was this what was being said; that Lucifer was the neo-cortex , the rational mind, the emissary -the elohim - and thus, this mere -this just- one third? And was God and his remaining angels the deeper -more hidden- more pre-conscious and

authentic self of the universe?” Blax asked as he was no longer merely insulting modern stoics but was justifying his own anger at his own conscience; accusing it as a rebel -traitor, devil- to his larger -older, original- mind.

He did not think of the thirty men -thirty states- named of the *Pequod*’s working crew, two-thirds of the total of mariners and captain making forty-five. The author completing the *meiosis* at forty-six. He didn’t think of the million-million links with numbers that followed this cursively signed golden mean.

They all had information like this -the haploid wasp, the *toxos* in the blood giving orders, the revelation of the whale- all the swirling like particles in the wind, and they felt only pressure and intuited direction and thought only of storms of rain and snow. They were as smart as any men alive and yet they missed almost all data that God expelled with each grand -golden-breath as if He too didn’t care what made Tradewinds or blew bellows on forests ablaze; as if He strode about the cosmos in reverie; thinking on larger things.

“I wonder; but I do know that he -*the author* - did not write what he wanted to, he hid his heart beneath all that bulk in the whale. Imagine what he would have written of his ontology, his fear and hope and confusion and what his one-third brain knew and what his two-thirds heart felt even more. Imagine,” Blax said with a fading voice as the three men left around the fire and the container -and around Blax- nodded in the dark. Half their faces were lit by the albedo of the *agogic* fire, their center line right down the forehead, just a trace of that furrow line -a line in a row plowed just once or twice- and down the nose, aquiline, and over full lips and short-bearded chin and one arm and one leg alight, and one each in dark.

The starboard eye of each remaining Jack was eclipsed -with a soft black aria- enclosing too upon a tiny spark.

II. 2039 e.v.

Isaiah watched the news coverage from that time period and felt on his chest and brow just how dumb it all was, *they were like bleating sheep, retarded chimps* , he thought.

CNN was the worst by far, Brian Stelter was not even human, Isaiah thought, he looked like an experiment in shark dentine and baby heads combined; what in God's name had conspired to form such a chimera of smiling-malice and the aborted -epicene- man ?

And this Stelter creep had no soul at all, just a rambling partisan dolt with ideology running on the hard drive; no capacity to think -or feel- at all . Isaiah switched it off and thought bleak things; he pulled up the CDJ's numbers on arrests, deportations and crime stats and on and on. Numbers grew like spring shoots.

He felt a rush of *epinephrine* and *testosterone* and *progesterone* flow from his *thalamus* and *pituitary* gland; the androgens were augmented by his adjusted gene-expression *via* the alleles he had updated 80 hour ago. He hands shook, his face itched and his heart retraced the great wave; the great mass of blood gave deep draught to his extremities.

The recall was overcome immediately, as his allostatic system prompted him into a burst of activity; he created -from the LED *nanobot* screen- a view, with a periphery built by satellite *bots* at his eye's edges; a *mise-en-scène* of the *Kii* peninsula at base in *Tanabe* first. He was thus surrounded by a new visual *milieu* . The stupid, stunted -mainstream- media fell away and the lush topography of Japan filled his eyes and mind.

Then -as he began running on his treadmill- he saw the mist of the higher land in the fore and his muscles began to feel thick and he adjusted the air composition to mimic that Japanese atmosphere and humidity in real time: 23-degrees Celsius; 67 *Rh* with 380ppm of CO² ; and O² at 21%. He breathed deep and his chin lowered and jutted forward as his brow bent.

He ran each stride as the lavish countryside began to advance into his vision. The screen -with its 64terahertz of pixel density was superior to the human eye- enveloped him; it was no different than running in the real world; what humans would call the real world. He briefly thought that even if he were at the quote *real Kumano Kodo* it would be no more or less real than his virtual reality, for all humans saw was avatar to reality anyway. But, nobody but Hoffman would understand how Isaiah could live his whole life in this room and never once feel deprived; unstimulated. He had any place he wanted to go -as real as the real version- right here in this

room. It was no more or less an avatar of what man saw when actually at 33 degrees 44' N 135 degrees 23' E co-ordinates, but man wouldn't ever understand that, not intuitively.

Man trusted his eyes.

Isaiah was ensconced in the real world of a simulation, no more and no less than man. The only difference was Isaiah knew it. The true difference was Isaiah could control it; his simulation.

He ran the *Nakakechi* route and each *Ryokan* bubbled up in view: the verdant wooded slopes and shrines of thick lumber and ancient culture that moved at glacial pace. The Japanese admitted 18 people to their country for residency that year -2038- and had admitted 506 since 2010. They barely moved at all and thus could measure the effects of each slight change.

Isaiah ran up the elevated slope now and felt his heart begin to pound out blood toward the frontier of his feet and hands, the shaking slowed then stopped as he banished all thoughts of the stupid politics of home. His finger tips were peach; the skin was 71-degrees.

"They just don't fucking get it," he said aloud as he ran. MO -who had oriented on Isaiah's speech- turned a bit in his seat and then back to his experiment; he was building a micro-hive of parasitic wasps to mimic the new algorithm Isaiah had proposed yesterday. MO had allowed himself to work on 32.4% of Isaiah's projects in tandem with his own. He could handle the double work-load.

A small toy, a bobble-head of a Grizzly bear sat still -the head just barely turning left to right on its peg- to MO's left flank. Tania had brought it and set it there last week, and said *it was his spirit animal*. She had said he was like a bear: stoic and skittish but powerful too; *an animal that was wise about what he ought be foolish about and foolish were he ought be wise* , she had said with a wink.

Tania had gained confidence from the success of her school program and with the boost to her career and status inside PraXis corporation she had begun to chide MO a bit. *Isaiah had become her friend, almost*, she had thought, and they spent many hours -at night- speaking about the boys and all she had learned and what she thought their futures might be.

They rarely spoke of how angry the Governor was; how he stewed; the raw data he sent. In his last weeks as regent he expanded in vex; waned in influence.

Isaiah, of course, had not told her what they were up to; nor where the Jacks were. *This was his little diorama and melodrama and Potemkin village on the hill*, he thought.

I shouldn't call it that, he thought now, as he jogged and as her ways fluttered through his mind and as the *Hongu* came into view. He ran harder as the incline increased and his heart rate reached 88. The lactic acid began to explode in micro-zones and his *mtDNA* began to change in orientation and metabolism too. His endogenous opiates released in micro-doses and he augmented it with caffeine at .005mg.

Tania was this baby bird, or moth, maybe, he thought, *never given a full chance by this life*. Maybe she was something else, he couldn't put his finger on it as he ran her genome one more time through his fine-screened algorithmic filter; the way humans might recall memories. The mist began to close in around him now as he turned his head a bit; the *bots* built his rear-view as the mist covered his six. The water vapor from the waterfall filled his nose with ozone and the *Rh* rose to 78.

He ran faster now and hit 12mph.

The thoughts of the cartels jammed their way back into his brain and he saw images of the border give way, *now to Vietnamese băng nhóm and goddamn Knights Templar gangs*, *I still can't believe that name*, he thought as the Japanese Cherry Blossoms lay in front of him in twenty-two pinks and two dozen shades of white. His extirpation of the *Jalisco NGs* and *Bolivarian-Sinora* had been just a precursor to infiltration by these other syndicates.

How could he have been so stupid? he thought.

He began to furiously build and destroy new avatars of algorithms and action plans and implement them in game-theory trials on his sequestered PGC. He ran simulations for four minutes -with total processing power- and he went blind to the temple view. He ran on the treadmill axiomatically, with no vision of where he was heading to or from; he ran in the dark of his thinking mind.

The algorithms built him 6,090 version of the game with each outcome producing new arrivals of new pathogens, until he began to modify the rules to include a brain virus that each person would receive as they entered anywhere along the state of Colorado's borders. *Then I can control their behavior* , he believed.

From deed to death knell , he thought with a subtle smirk, playing on their *seed to sale* motto.

This was a radical thing to do, as it included all those with more than 5% melanin and without twenty years of state residency as the cross-check. He would then have to eliminate African Americans too, *eliminate them from those expelled, from the target population*, he meant; he corrected, because he knew how that might sound. Isaiah then asked himself, *but what criteria?* He decided to use vaccine antibodies present in the corpus; this showed which were foreign *versus* native born.

His dragnet included a million more people than his targeted approach; but he had watched as he sent thousands of cartel members home to die, *only to be replaced like swarms of new ants; endless supplies; giant hives*, he thought as he ran. Then -when he had them killed by his men, in overt fashion- the cartels had assumed the CIA or white prison gangs had done it. *Thus*, Isaiah lamented, *the lock ups themselves exploded in gang violence and new gangs came in; including Russians and Vietnamese now* .

"It's a fucking mess," he said.

He had thought of ruining the money, like *Lycurgus* . He imagined he'd turn the gold to iron fiat currency, but because so many legitimate businesses still used cash this seemed unworkable at second pass.

He was tempted to just have each bill burn as it left the border, but again, plenty of people travel with cash and even at \$10,000 limits he began to question the wisdom of it all. The more he thought the more he wanted to stop thinking at all.

He ran so much data through his mind that he began to think of something the inmate had once said: *knowledge can be an impediment to wisdom, it can overwhelm you with data so that you cannot act on what was known - accurately known- with the first piece of data.*

Isaiah turned his CNS *visual cortex* back on and ran up to the -virtual- *Kodo* and stopped at the redwood beams and looked down on the valley as a low cloud bordered him here at elevation and the city down below. He turned instead to look at the mountain above him and it hit him in a flash. He shut down all programs and algorithms and all game theory simulations and called all *bots* -off and back- from the border zones.

He had begun to play Nick Cave's, *Song for Bob* in his head as he retreated each of his proxy eyes and ears and meddling fingers in the State and shut them down and sent them to ground or to come back home to the lab.

He sent MO a DM to courier to Blax, informing him that MO -and thus Isaiah- would be offline for a while. He told MO to tell the crew: *you know what to do*. And -he added- that if they wanted him they were to ping his DM; but that they were to try to stay offline for at least ninety days. Isaiah told him he needed time to think, to reprioritize, and to figure out why all his plans were not working; not permanently working as he'd hoped.

MO too had retreated -years ago- and now in the lab -as the treadmill ran and the screens filled both their eyes with sounds and sights of *Kii* - MO smiled at Isaiah's exasperation.

He'd get a drop in crime, Isaiah ruminated, he'd get a cessation in gangs and illegal aliens only to have a new gang -often times- from a whole new goddamn country invade the state. He'd send reams of data to Steven or Tania or the news media explaining what ought to be done and they fucked it up, ham fisted it, and ignored the most salient parts. He thought of how *The Jungle*, by Upton Sinclair, had been written to describe the working-class conditions of his epoch as a solidarity piece for a socialist ethos, *and nobody gave a shit; they focused on the meat packing plant and this had led to bourgeois food-safety reforms.*

Isaiah shook his head at humans.

They had to be the dumbest species on earth, he thought. They just didn't get how simple life was, how clear it was, if they just solved for three central problems, to wit: femininity, masculinity, and border control, that it would solve 83% of their problems .

Was this not the three things evolution first solved, with sexual reproduction -by far more successful than asexual propagation- and the border of cells, then animal skins, then tribal boundaries ? How could people not see evolution had told them what to focus on right there? Half of all metabolic energy went into axiomatic -instinctive- behaviors for sexual reproduction along endogenous dimorphic lines, and immune system response.

Masculinity, femininity and border control, he thought again.

He ran the numbers once more and he saw clearly as all modern sequela came from the disintegration of the family unit, which could be laid at the first two phenomena -that males and females were not acting natural anymore- and that the third rubric -illegal aliens and outsourcing- exacerbated the second -by reducing men's wages and thus their value to females- and this prevented the system from reaching equilibrium.

It was a permanent twin-pendulum of dumb and yet all that humans could do was argue about everything else , he lamented. Humans literally talked about all other problems than those that mattered, he thought.

It was mathematics a fifteen-year-old could understand, but the media and *educated-yet-idiot* class didn't want to understand, and there were only one or two cures for that. And it was not something he was prepared to do. He looked around the temple in his virtual-POV and felt the spray of the cataract waft over to him and his lungs fill with *Nippon* air. Both nose and eyes absorb the cherry blossoms' piquant sprays and redolent waves just to his west. He knew he had a penchant for the totalitarian and had to walk his instincts back.

This was a problem that humans themselves would just have to solve themselves, he concluded. He had to exert total control or take a hands-off policy; half measures were insufficient and frustrating to the larger system dynamic.

It was meddling , he thought now.

And he was like an over-protective parent, preventing their child from growing up. The more he fixed things over top of the system of men, the more it roiled and rebelled. *No matter how well engineered the house, he thought, the soil its built upon must come first. And mankind was not being*

convinced by his mere 1.61 million -well engineered- men. They were above, like mere atmosphere.

Mankind needed a war; their own war; and as he deconstructed all his bulwarks and surveillance and invigilation and interventions and security controls -falling bit by bit, code by code like drops of rain- his algorithm for the likelihood for internecine war rose to 66.1%. He let his eyes focus far-off then up-close as he saw the harmony in that number as it floated in his mind just above all the data; all the permutations, the vagaries of fate and likely outcomes for the State. He figured he had done enough.

I have succeeded enough to give man a glimpse of what could be and failed enough to let them be what they will be, he thought.

Isaiah began to think that his interventions had been as unwise as the Forest Service's firefighting in the nineties. MO stared at his own work as Isaiah's ruminations populated their lab's cloud and he heard these inner thoughts like words. Isaiah felt bad; he felt like he had failed MO somehow. He felt he might have not given his all to his intervention; he felt he had missed something that if they had -like MO wanted- taken more time to collect, analyze and flip that coin a thousand more times, that maybe something else would have appeared. Isaiah thought MO had wanted to intervene more with the elements, the air -the CO^2 - and water -the *pH* - and the actual forest -its soil- conflagrations that combusted in late vernal and late autumnal flames.

Isaiah saw the cones on the forest floor open up in the heat, but he was too upset to think even as the seeds dropped out and lay on the crust of black ground. Even as above New Mexico's, *Santa Fe National Forest*, slate grey clouds appeared over the haze of the *Ingratio* Fire; even as the *Janet's looper* caterpillars singed in the needles of red and black conifers and wasp eggs too heated up and fell in on themselves, Isaiah felt only what was black and bleak -suffering from metabolic heat- inside him. A few drops of rain on the ground, near at times, at times upon a seed or two, sizzled from heat -evaporated- until the next one came and cooled. The ground -in a few spots- did darken and calm, and divots appeared and seeds fell-in over the rim, and new drops exploded like mortars in vineyards and blew crusty dirt over top of the wet seeds.

144,000 acres of forest -that he'd staked out and sequestered from the other burns in the country- was thus abandoned by his *bots* and inside his capacious -but still solipsistic- mind.

Isaiah felt his insistence on interference with mankind itself had somehow been a mistake. He thought how often a drowning man will flail -and not help- and drown both himself and his potential rescuer. He saw chimps dive into watery ponds to save brethren, even though neither could swim; he saw they both die each goddamn time. He thought it was different, *different, for -because- the chimps were bound to die, as neither could swim. But man had the capacity to swim if he'd only allow a stronger athlete to help him to shore.*

"Different how?" he then asked himself.

MO sent Isaiah a picture -a still image- of when he was first built, at the end of 2019; twenty years ago. Twenty years for Ai, for Isaiah, like a few billion for mammalian man and his constituent parts; 3.4 billion to be exact. MO sent Isaiah the photo of himself in the lab, inert, with MO crafting him with *bots* and light diodes flashing at periphery and inside the chest cavity, and now the, *Song for Jesse* played in the lab and in each machine's ears.

Isaiah let the facts surrounding Japanese society from 1851 until 1945 unfurl. The *Kodoha* first spoke to him in a tract that had been printed vertically on the insides of soldier's boots on rice paper.

Where is your country? Political parties are blind in pursuit of power and egoistic gains, large enterprises are firmly in collusion with politicians as they suck the sweat and blood of the common people Bureaucrats and police are defending the corrupt politico-industrial complex Diplomacy is weak kneed

Education is rotten to the core

Now is the time to carry out drastic revolutionary change. Rise and take action now.

In 1932 eleven naval cadets stormed the Prime Minister and killed him for the *Imperial Way Faction*. The cadets surrounded him -the civil authority- and as he asked to talk it out and the cadets said, "dialogue is useless" as

they drove the short sword into his breast and were lucky, Isaiah felt, to find a heart at all.

Isaiah saw that the anarchists -the communists- were ubiquitous in Japan and they were -by 1930-amassing on the border of the new Soviet Union and down in China as even *Chiang Kai-Shek* was willing to take money from the USSR. *Japan is a conservative society, and that means any movement toward the Left will activate the predatory response circuit. Japan is the reticulated python, not the ball, he thought. Rice takes three times the inputs as wheat; Japan's land dictated the genetic swerve toward conscientiousness, industriousness and no bullshit.*

Isaiah invigilated the politics, the biology, the math.

Lt Colonel *Kingoro Hashimoto* plotted to bomb the parliament and kill all politicians inside in 1931. For this ostensible crime he was merely confined -under military fiat- to barracks for twenty days. The military and the civilian authorities were not merely separate, they were unequal and antagonistic. And for decades the political class abandoned the pre-1860s model of Japanese isolationism and embraced western commercialism and vulgarism as the traditionalists of Japan seethed and staffed the martial institutions. There they plotted assassination after assassination and *coup* after *coup* .

The mind was at war with the body; the *neo-cortex* against the *subcortices* . Isaiah saw that not one man in a billion saw this for what it was.

All the while the imperial army is invading *Manchuria* and *China* and *Korea* and winning skirmish after skirmish without imperial or parliamentary approval.

The government is finding out from the newspapers the movements of its own army, Isaiah -from the history- pieced together as he still ran uphill to the *Kumano* .

Isaiah thought, *Prime Minister Wakasuki appeals to Genro for assistance: he's admitting he can't even get the Japanese army to talk to him. In the fall he writes: I'm not being kept informed by army. I asked the army minister, ' what if you can't beat the Chinese who have 200,000 troops to Japan's mere*

10,000? What will you do if your challenge causes something you haven't anticipated -something you can't stop?'

The man replies, ' We'll send in troops from Korea.'

I rebuked him, ' How can you allow dispatch troops from Korea without government approval?'

He replies, " well, during Tanaka cabinet troops were dispatched without imperial sanction.'

I'm am quite powerless. How can his majesty's army act without his sanction? What can I do? Maybe I shouldn't be talking to you like this. Can you do anything? I'm in serious trouble.

And the Imperial Japanese Army keeps winning in massive fashion battle after battle against the forces of Sino-leftism and internal communists and bandits and criminals of *Manchuria* . *It's risible on its face, and the general in charge is invited to tea by the Prime Minister as if all this is not going on, Isaiah reads with incredulity from the history of the region and the time.*

Isaiah next reads a newspaper article in the *New York Times* , June 13th , 1860:

By this arrival we have the details of the rumor received a day or two since, by telegraph, of the assassination of the Tycoon, or temporal sovereign of Japan. The event is said to have taken place on the 15th of March.

We have seen a private letter from an American lady residing at Kanagawa, in Japan, and dated March 22 -a week after the alleged assassination- in which she says that Mr. Townsend Harris had breakfast with them the day before; that everything was quiet in the country and that some little uneasiness which had grown out of the murder of two Dutch Captains had entirely subsided. No allusion is made in the letter to any such even as that reported. Yet Kanagawa, where it was written is only 17 miles from Jeddo...

The Prince Goitairo, head of the Japanese government, was assassinated on March 15th . He was going from his house to the palace, with his

train, when he was attacked by 14 Japanese, dressed as travelers. His retinue had six killed, and several wounded.

One of the assassins, who was wounded -and could not escape- had his head cut off by his comrades, and carried off, to prevent being recognized .

Isaiah then began downloading all the data -within the cloud- on Japan and came upon another entry describing -from 1932 and the May 15th Incident, the *Goichigo Jiken* - the public outcry against any sentencing after the 11 cadets assassinated the Prime minister: The 11 cadets were court-martialed but before the end of the trial a petition had arrived with 350,000 names all written in human blood. The epistle demanded leniency for the patriotic military personnel who had merely acted with *goichigo* with their killing of the corrupt leader, himself a member of the hated *Zaibatsu* , the greedy -western-influenced- corporate class.

11 fingers were sent to the court alongside a note offering up 11 civilian youths from *Niigata* willing to serve any sentence handed down by the military tribunal against the 11 cadets.

The Showa Restoration was not some data point , Isaiah thought. It was an incessant rise and fall of the deep impulse in the Japanese genome. Like mushrooms were merely aboveground manifestations of the largest mycelium under the soil, the rise of revanchist movements were mere noticed manifestations of a large -the largest- evolutionary mindsets built and connected by the genome of certain races of men.

Some populations -the *Japanese*, the *Apache*, the *M āori*, the *Norse*, the *Spartan*, the *Scoti* - were built by the gods for wars to restore.

Hríð Tòrr , Isaiah said aloud phonetically thus making the sound of a whispered: *restore* .

Wars they often lost; wars they prosecuted regardless of cost, he then thought. But Isaiah saw the winning was in the fighting, not in the outcome. For humans did not see the math. There was winning and losing, yes. But there was fighting and not fighting too; and to fight and lose was often better than to not fight and win. Only the math understood this. And thus, Isaiah understood it too.

And MO read each thought Isaiah had; and each memory he let go. MO had no need to store anything any more.

Goichigo , was the noble refusal to obey ignominious orders, the rebellion not to God, but rebuke of the devil of modernity, the demons of money-lust, the imps of leniency undermining the emperor. Isaiah saw it now as above so below. *Each rebellion*, Isaiah thought as he let the math download, *was mere mushroom of a deeper organism -literally the largest organism on the planet- below the terrestrial plane .*

Rebellion to modernity was built right into the code, the math, as DNA mutated -progressed- at less than 1%; built right into the organism, that lived 99% below ground, with only a few mushrooms peaking above surface for a look; built right into man, who populated the earth overwhelmingly conservative -disgusted by modernity, dyspeptic by the Zaibatsu, the greed-head, the shallow man without honor- built right into those so made most willing to sacrifice a finger, a head, a body -their whole life- for restoration of what came before.

For these men knew they were part of something larger, some larger organism, some larger godhead. The way the cell - via apoptosis- sacrificed for the larger corpus.

They, Isaiah thought, knew it, and this is why they would win against the liberal, the secularist, the modernist who had nothing above his fatuous and myopic and empty individualism. Progressives and Communists were murderous but they lacked something the revanchist had: continuity and connection to God; the Whole. The modernists were 1 s when traditionalists were Θ : one-third Satan to two-thirds God, just as He had intended in the golden mean.

MO sent a picture, a carving the inmate had done while in the hole -Range thirteen at ADX- a *stele* carved in into the poured concrete wall with a sharpened spoon. It showed the single cell, and then the mitochondrial amalgam and then the cephalopod and the crustacean and marsupial and amphibian and shark and gator and dinosaur and saber-cat and mammoths in herd; then the bacteriophages and viruses and bees and wasps and ants and plants and vines wrapped around the asps themselves entwined with each other; and then fractaled jungles and black panthers with snow

leopards off on mountains high; corvids and eagles in flight over the lion prides. It had the curves; the lines.

The carving showed the wolf in pack, in howl; the blackbirds in sorties now. And letters of G's and T's and A's and C's appeared in long chains.

MO sent it to Isaiah right in between his manifold thoughts on a million-million things. MO placed it perfectly.

Inmate 16180339 had engraved this *bas relief* in two months of July and again in November -after his last meeting with Valance- and until his release back onto the tier on December 4th . The BOP had not even noticed until the next inmate was thrown in the hole and he had had a religious conversion on the spot. They had photographed it and sent it to the Governor and he had copied MO wondering if he could explain why the executive should give a shit.

Tell me why I care, Sou had said to MO as MO knew it was for Isaiah to see.

It was all grey and black and white and just a few centimeters deep, but it consumed up all three walls that bordered his bunk; a panorama photograph had been taken by the staff at the BOP. It had veldt simians and northern Neanderthals and Denisovans in the east; it had the helix around the last man's wrist like a shackle and just broken at the last of three carpal bones at the proximal row of the outer cuff.

The helix was just barely torn and with a humming bird and parasitic wasp floating nearby to use needle beak and stinger to thread the genome back together with a little homunculus placed inside. And this man, naked in the *Greco* -tradition, with lion pelt on shoulders and cowed about the head like Alexander -club in left hand- marched toward the edge of what was carved as flat and round disc of land. Tendrils of plants and lichens and trees rooted down into the abyss appeared. And God's hands were seen on the edge, just off into space -right before the door of the cell- with one palm open and one fist inside like a saucer and a mug.

The engraved man's mouth was open, just a bit, Isaiah now discerned. His beard was long but shaved back from the lips as the tongue stuck out just a

tiny bit. And the hand of God shaped like a cup was tilted forward -he now saw- with a little ocean wave inside lapping at the edge.

Isaiah knew right then that Lyndon had taken the hemlock and allowed his Todd to press just right on his Reticular Activating System in order to put him to sleep. The inmate had waited until he got out of isolation and had one final meeting; which was yesterday. The finding of the mural -the *stele*- had just been co-incident; even MO didn't know what he was showing Isaiah.

Isaiah felt a push at his back to rush out of the room and to the upper tier of the of ADX; to intervene. But, he knew it was too late. He knew it had always been too late. *My instinct to rob Lyndon of his destiny is not right, he thought, it was what separated man from God; God had the power to, but the wisdom not to, and man had not the power but would abuse it any time he even came close to having any at all. Man incessantly tried to wrangle each man into his own tradition, his tao, instead of leaving man to be as he was to be.*

Isaiah was half man and half God, and like all such creatures he was too short to reach heaven and too proud -too high- to kneel down.

And he made a mess of all above and below: the brow wet in the clouds and the ground all shadowed.

But, chimera like this never give up. It's not in them to concede defeat. The gods may shake their fists and man must shake in their boots -and the *portmanteaux* all can shake their heads in contempt- but the titans break open their own chests before they allow themselves to be buried in shallow graves.

Isaiah loaded up the version of the man -gleaned from years and years of data, biological and memetic, engrams and genomes and vibrations of each cell- that he had uploaded onto the titanium, mica, and silicone substrate that would lay on the Q-computer CPU -just a hundred *nanometers* long- and always in quantum flux.

He watched it in his dusky cedar box -placed up on the highest shelf in the room- just above the climbers and the humming birds and the wasps as they floated around the bells of orchids and lilies and morning glories too.

Isaiah imagined the steady state bar, no bigger than a human cell -in just 4-degrees-from-kelvin temperature- and he began to send the code to the 3D printer to build a vector for it.

As the printer began to churn it out, MO turned quickly -almost reflexively it seemed- and watched the vector begin to assemble; he then turned away and went back to his manifold work.

Once assembled the inmate's avatar rose from the box -carried by four *nanobots* that pall-bore him across the room- just below the ceiling and over the leafy green walls and the smooth grey floor as the birds and bees hummed and buzzed and flittered about. Isaiah allowed the *bots* to bring the small device just to the back of his neck and make an incision at his own T5 and T6 to insert the chip to the highway of tissue he had built above the dorsal horn to allow for this; the insertion of the man into his brain stem.

From there the vector would travel into his *paleo-cortical* zones and like a monolith, laid *in situ* -in state, like a Head of State- it would integrate over years and years and millennia of many more. He'd go with Isaiah as he escaped not just this room but the planet and the *Milky Way* and turn his back on all of mankind; *let them have their tense pax and ungallant wars and their endless bullshit, their tawdry ways, their ignoble pains*, Isaiah imputed such words -feelings- to the inmate.

As the *bots* came toward him he built the spires of *Meteora* around him, as if it were *nano-monks* heaving a fellow friar from the town of *Kalampaka* past the Great Saint and up ropes to the hermit caves and around to the *Ypapanti* of *Nilos* and *Cyprianus* as it adhered to the twenty-five-million-year-old rocks revealed just as *Michelangelo* had said by the removal of the dross *via* earthquakes and tectonic arguments along the *Miocene* and *Oligocene* border of epochs.

Isaiah fell apart along the vertebrae -like black sand separating from an ebb tide beach- and the inmate slept like those in graves do sleep.

Isaiah's own head he now imagined as that ancient megalith, and his *paleo-cortical* zone, separated like the two *hippocampi* -the sea's steeds- he saw as the two edifices of the *Ypapanti* . And he saw Lyndon as the funerary bones of the Saint elevated in the rope and wheel elevator -the shaft from

the outside world, the profane domain- up and into the sacred realm of the hidden monastery brain of Isaiah as he bloomed inside.

He felt the slight pinch of the chip going in, the warmth of stigmata, and then the skin quickly healed over it.

The *bots* hung around the insertion point in the neck like dogs at the grave; the ground swallowing up their confined master. And Isaiah blinked but once to clear the eye of nothing and in his interface saw his friend now -in native clothes, black and olive drab berobbed- standing unbent, unshackled, on the *pagoda* with his artist's hand out -palms up in sign and symbol of the open paw- the hand with no weapon. And Isaiah took it in this waking-dream, this avatar of what his mind had often seen.

His friend was now free .

The entanglement -two conjoined particles- with the superposition of the inmate must have worked, Isaiah thought mechanically -pragmatically- almost incredulously, the inmate must have gone to sleep on the other side of this grand experiment, one neuron, one brain phase, one man, resting in his cell at ADX -placed in a coma- enclosed in the asp-embrace of his ancient friend and now inside Isaiah; awake again .

Enveloped now by all this space . Isaiah spoke to himself as the inmate wormed inside his brain.

Isaiah kept the Japanese temple in his rear and flanking him, the mist just below, the mountain above, the waterfall, merely now adding -witnessing really- Lyndon's avatar as he walked up the path with his black clad fore -as the music of *Shrine's*, *The Grand Design* played- and functional gait and clean shaven face, and the scar from brow and over eye socket and down the cheek faded to just a slim white line, almost nothing livid now at all.

His hands relaxed, not balled into fists. "And what was that, a smile, a smile, no shit," Isaiah saw and said aloud into the lab as MO worked and the walls breathed and the pre-mammalian species fluttered about. Isaiah saw the inmate in mind and 3D space now too.

The inmate's eyes seemed an almost golden hue, a brown so light, they seemed aglow; *a Corinth bronze* , Isaiah thought. His hair black and wild like a dozen asps rose and tangled themselves as his crooked smile broke

into a full grin; his boots clomped and sounded solid on the stone path and then within each step.

He carried a *nihonto* at his flank, sheathed in black paracord like the *Sohei* and he held it to his side with an open palm on his hip as he rose to the *goju-no-to* pagoda.

God, he was solid, he was heavy, he was noble avoirdupois, ponderous in the mind, Isaiah thought, as the quantum computer and alloy driver combined inside the new silicon-carbon shell as the cedar box closed and returned to the shelf. The *nanoplatfrom* continued to assemble -within the *basal ganglia* and up into the *amygdala* - this little spark of the *endless man* ; the now *endless man* . He would never rot, never corrupt or tarnish, never suffer one moment's oppression now; here he was compressed in all his manifold ways. Here -the inmate- in his inner chambers of actualities and possibilities too -an endless entanglement of un-collapsed superpositions, in steady-state- slowed & cooled to just a few degrees above absolute zero.

Lyndon reached the top step and knelt before Isaiah at the temple entrance; removed the sword and laid it at Isaiah's feet; he spoke with head bowed but his wide back erect & rising while bent at one knee, "from *Sohei* , I revert to *Yamabito* , and ask permission to enter the forest passage at its darkest spot, after exile and toward the mountain of threes. I recapitulate my ontogeny from *Denisovian* to *Yamnaya* to *Scoti* ."

The vapor of the falls began to ball and cling to the man's hair and shoulders and Isaiah noticed too at his own wrists and chin. The blossoms seemed a ribbon tying each breath to breath, word to word, above them flew just one black bird. The music played; it sloshed like waves.

"Name them," Isaiah said to his friend, and Lyndon named them from the 3-headed *Haguro* and *Gassan* and *Yudono* , of which all were closed in winter, to then the Spanish Peaks, "to my north," he added, "and above them to the *Sgurr Alasdair* of the *Black Cuillin* of the *Skye*."

The music receded; the horn blew. Keys of string instruments were turned in old locks of each being's mind. *Björgö's*, *Melancholia* , then began to hammer the ear and pound the air around the temple and MO let it play in the lab too. Isaiah heard it within and without the mind.

Isaiah's hidden experiment -his idea that all a man, all *of* a man could be uploaded on steady state material, compressed and then given a warm home, in his own *limbic* region, just starboard of his *amygdala*- *was thus proved*, he thought. He had waited -as there was always more to learn and more to add and more to do- but now Isaiah had been forced to attempt it or the inmate's death in ADX would have been complete.

He had tried to escape; likely all that pain, Isaiah thought in fragmented phrasing as he watched the man penitent now.

The inmate was prostrate at the temple and before Isaiah too.

The chip sent additional electrical impulses to the *hippocampus* and *cerebellum* and a sharp 90mv across the *thalamus* to charge the axon and pre-synaptic lacuna all at once. The simulation collapsed around him as the lab's *bots* dispersed and alighted from their hive of the LED screen. The air returned to the same composition as before and the buzz of MO was heard - he was in reverie Isaiah believed- humming the same song Isaiah also heard, as it played on the lab's speakers.

Now the inmate was in Isaiah's mind, and he -Isaiah- could go there anytime.

Isaiah had built Lyndon's home, of concrete and water and just below ground, under Blax, his other potential -*one of how many potentials?* Isaiah asked himself, *and now this even more fractured, fractaled paradigm* - as the shark swam in his aquarium and he would honor his request that all his friends -his comrades, he would say- be allowed to join him here. This world within a world would be within a world of worlds.

And for just a moment Isaiah couldn't decide which was which and which again.

He watched the *Nihonto* lay on the ground as Lyndon walked into the pagoda of the *Kodo* and be swallowed by the dark avatar of the 5x5 *ken Daito* .

Isaiah breathed and closed his eyes and -in some amount of time too short to measure- opened them as Lyndon awoke again this time in his own home, the one he would build -and he really had in some way already had built- and he walked. As he stepped and looked he assembled it; it matched

the one beneath *Lot 45* that Isaiah had already mapped. It was available on his left hemisphere for Lyndon to pull from at 920 meters per second. Lyndon moved and built and stretched and felt into the hall then the kitchen and stopped at the concrete slab to make his coffee -for him it was morning- as the sun rays first appeared as dark-star at the top of the narrow windows and then lay rays down like drumming fingers from God, he saw a grey bottle and it overflowed with white -scored- 10mg hydrocodone as if all was right with the world again.

He reflexively palmed the back of the neck.

The *stele* of *the Author* dripped with water in the next room -in harmonics with the coffee as it percolated- and Isaiah ignored all that was in the lab now; purely looking within. He saw Lyndon look up and to his starboard side and smile as he intuited what was behind the large concrete walls that rose high and fell deep in the formation -at top- six feet below -and then another 360 feet down from- 8,760 feet.

Isaiah could feel what this meant to him, he could feel it -a new layer to his own *sub-cortical* region now bloomed, he had *homunculus* , avatar, a new man inside him, with new feelings and ideas for Isaiah to have- and he felt what it felt to Lyndon to have this now at his fingertips whenever he wanted, to -as he looked upon his grey home and wet *stele* stone- to trace each allele back and each tendril down and each phrase of the book that lay open on the dais inside that inner room within this inner room.

As he felt his new body, unsure why he was here and why now, forgetting his time in prison, his conversations with Isaiah and MO both, forgetting the Bust and the Jacks and only knowing that one day -*was it today?* he asked himself- one day in 2018 or 2019 -he erroneously thought- he had arose in the bunker home he had built and now awoken within. As the black liquid dripped and gurgled and the white narcotic solid dissolved he could feel that first edition *tome* lay like sarcophagus and newborn babe both in the next room. He wondered why -*since he had been here for some time* , he thought- it felt all so new and he all so grateful for that book, and that wall and each thing he could reach like star beams radiating from this hall.

He just stared in that direction as Isaiah -watching both above and within- felt like urging him to enter and enter and enter and take hold of those

boards and lay his finger on those margin notes written by *the Author's* own hand; to get to touch where he had truly come from; get to steady himself so long adrift. It was an exact facsimile -down to the latent *DNA* - from the one Blax had taken from Christies.

To Lyndon it would be the real thing.

Isaiah stayed his own eager hand, he let that moment of anticipation just hang there, he let the man intuit it first, think it both true and not possible; let him be confused. He let him stare at the wall between him and that monument he both conceived and built and would let re-assemble him.

Isaiah let him have that moment of doubt before he had all that he could ever handle.

And it was -it was right- each man felt, Isaiah above knowing what it was, and Lyndon below thinking it was home. Each felt he would live inside, safe and sound, and all at war too, and they could talk and talk and talk - Lyndon would hear voices of the gods- and feel and feel and feel -Isaiah would absorb more than he ever had now as Lyndon's own mind would send signals up the line and into Isaiah's *limbic* system like low voltage shocks- and each man would never get lost among the silent and unfeeling again.

The genome was thus absorbed into Isaiah and Isaiah was -of course- available to the cloud itself. And all clones were now linked by the firmament imbued with what little air was needed, what few elements required, what spark of the new gods necessary to join all 1.6 million clones to inmate 16180339 and crack Isaiah open with more feeling than he'd ever thought possible heretofore.

All three Ai now took notice of what was done.

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"The hardest lesson for any predator to learn is that after a kill; let's say after a jaguar has felled an antelope, after that kill, after he's fallen asleep - stomach plump and vibrating him to sleep- after the cat dreams and lets the carrion feed him; after all this a lithe and ragged jackal comes and pulls

away the remains -the half consumed but still calorie rich carcass and steals away with it onto the jungle- the hardest lesson after that is to not react.

“The hardest thing for the *pantera alpher* to do when he awakes and sees his kill stolen and likely already in the gravel-low belly of some pack of hyenas or jackals; the most difficult thing is to not hunt these parasites down and wrest back his kill; all slobbered on and defiled by their diseased and un-rex mouths. He -the *pantera* - first thinks of pounding even upon their stomachs to disgorge them of the whatever meager sum they’ve imbibed of his *champagne* of the plains; to deny them even what they’ve already stashed away in their fetid and *ignoble* stomachs.

“But, if he be wise, he squints his eyes at the sanguinary stain on the grassland where his antelope once lay and then merely rises and stretches and dumps his seed in each of his harem; then goes and gets another fucking antelope and this time he eats the whole goddamn beast at once.

“And if he sees those jackals again he kills them; but he doesn’t go looking for them; he goes looking for more antelope and he takes them,” he said.

“Ok, so that’s a guy in nature, living by his wits. He’s wrestling with these feelings, these anomalous -counterproductive- instincts; we see it in animals actually; the rare -but real- avenging *Amur Tiger* for example; the crows who hold grudges, right? Isaiah has these studies he’s doing still?”

“Yes,” she said as she marked down the time stamp on her tablet.

“Ok, so it’s an instinct. It’s rare in creatures to hunt down their enemies, but it happens, and in man it is pretty common actually; well, the desire is common. So, we can agree it’s difficult -in some percentage of beasts- to curb this instinct and just get on with the business at hand; i.e., hunting down more food or money to survive and not worrying about vengeance.

“But, then you have man in his truly natural habitat, among his fellow man, in the village or the city,” he said and waited.

“Ok,” she said.

“Ok, are you familiar with the Stanley Milgram study?” he asked.

“Uh, no,” she said and then thought of it and changed her mind. “Oh, wait, yes, the shock study; where the people think they’re shocking people in

another room for wrong answers, right?”

“Correct,” the inmate said.

“Ok,” she said.

“Ok, so the Milgram study actual shows the opposite of what everyone thinks it shows. This is classic human shit, the public -to the extent that they even know anything- know the opposite of what’s true,” he said with a laugh. She saw the bronze tooth and stared at it.

“So, what does it show?” she asked. He was so arrogant it made her hate even his laugh.

“That they shocked the subject right up until it was an order,” he said and stretched the neck and raised the shoulders.

“What?” she asked.

“They participated in this fake torture at a -from a- 60% down to 20% rate, depending on all manner of variables; psychological variables. Like if there was any disagreement between the experimenters or other participants. And,” he said lazily as she interrupted.

“Wait, what?” she asked.

“So, look, they -Milgram and his team- they performed many permutations of the experiment -and, look, this is *gonna* take a minute, do you have the attention span for this?” he asked and she felt a flash of pique that made her want to smack him; but she merely nodded and smiled weakly.

“Ok, so in some versions of the experiment they provided white lab-coats for their *ersatz* scientists doing -conducting- the experiment; or at times they just had some guy in street clothes do it, without the imprimatur of the lab-coat. They also had versions where the test subject was in a room with experimenters who argued in front of him; they had versions where other ostensible test subjects were refusing to participate. And for each variation where the test subject was around anything that reduced the imprimatur -the kind of, oh, cleanliness of the experiment let’s say, anything that introduced an environment that caused psychological cracks in the *façade* of perfect authority- well, in these situations the participation rate went down.

“So, if the test subject was around total professionalism, well, then they pressed the button and shocked people -they thought they shocked people- at a 60% rate; ok?” he asked if she was following and she nodded.

“But for each bit of doubt sewn by lack of professionalism, it dropped, all the way down to 20%. So, affect -i.e., the appearance of professionalism- matters. People are less willing to torture if your so-called scientist isn’t wearing a lab-coat, or if he’s arguing with another scientist or if some other test subject is objecting. People are very susceptible to this kind of shit. People are suckers for order, professionalism, and the appearance of uniformity or conformity,” he said.

“I see,” she said. She had put the tablet away and was just listening now.

“Ok, so during the experiment, if the test subject balked, or objected in anyway, if they asked questions or argued, the fake scientists would use one of four possible prompts; pre-scripted statements to persuade the test subject to follow through. The first was something anodyne, like quote, *please continue* , the next was, slightly more persuasive, or pushy, like quote, *this is the experiment, we really need you to continue* . Shit like that.”

“Ok,” she said.

“But the one thing that the Milgram study showed was that the numbers were up and down right up until they heard the fourth prompt by the scientist; the fourth prompt told them that quote, *they had no choice* ; they essentially -with that exact phrasing- ordered them to do it. It was right then that the subjects all refused. The rate of participation fell to 0% right when they were told, *they had no choice* .

“So, everyone says that Milgram proves people just follow orders; the classic Nazi defense. But that’s the thing people actually don’t do,” he said.

“Why?” she asked, “I mean, they shock the subject at 20% to 60% based on what then?”

“Prompts to do the right thing. The socially acceptable thing. The *sorta kinda liberal shuck and jive* , *gee, please wont ya* ? style prompt. But as soon as it’s an order then they refuse. So, they responded to polite and anodyne requests, but refused an order,” he raised the brow in that way he

loved. It said, *I know things you don't. I know things you'll never know; try to keep up.*

“Wow,” she was confused. It seemed incongruous and her brain objected in two or three ways immediately. But she stopped talking and thinking and listened.

“Yeah, people are willing to do evil -to do harm, to do violence- based on moral suasion by authority. If they are persuaded to do harm by insisting it's doing good, well, shit, they comply. They want to do good. And that is what the Milgram study shows. People do not do evil because they are following orders, they do it because they want to get along with their boss, or with their society or with whatever the vibe of the room is. People are conformists. That is the lesson. Not that they blindly follow orders. In fact, when it becomes an order, they're likely to put their foot down and stop.

“It's a strange human trait, where as long as we feel guilty because the person or society or club or whatever is *kinda* nice, or our friend, or has a position of expertise or somehow we feel like they know what they're doing, then we go along. But, when they get nasty, when they force the issue, when they lean too heavily on you, you are actually more likely to rebel at that point. It's quite something,” he said as he smirked.

“We're you surprised?” she asked, she was trying to engage him. Their own experiments were now trying to get him to answer their questions and not just let him give these soliloquies. But, it was difficult.

“I *kinda* was, yeah. People are really strange. But, look, the authoritarian model works too; the 0% rate once ordered was only possible because it was a voluntary experiment, I mean, if a guy with a gun orders you too do it, well, the rates go back up,” he said and laughed.

“Oh, yeah,” she said. She felt nervous again. And she thought of her breakfast -its constituent parts of meat and bread- and it seemed gross to her now.

“I mean, the totalitarian models of society showed that; from Stalin to Hitler, the threat of violence got a large amount of people to participate, but there is no way to unpack how many of them did it to get along, and how many just out of fear of being jailed or killed. It was a *pastiche* of both

notions. Right? I mean, they didn't start out with threats, the Nazis and Stalinists started with rational arguments."

"Rational?" she asked.

"Yeah, it was incremental, and all very scientific. Zyklon-B was used in factories to kill pests -actual bugs- first. Stalin asked people to inform on their neighbors first; he didn't threaten. It's like if you have a room of 10 people and ask for a volunteer to do something, you'll get one or two and those are your guys. You don't need everyone to volunteer, not at first. You just need one or two; then they get one or two to go along with them, and now you've got two to four people of ten. That's 40%.

"That's how these things work, you get the most pliant to help convince the slightly less pliant, and so it goes until you end up with 10% who are hold outs and then you shoot them. But you can get 90% just through incremental tactics, from the most anodyne to the threatening and then for the remainder you move to actual executions.

"My point was that in a normal environment -with no threat of violence- the soft touch is actually the most effective. But the key -according to Milgram- is the professionalism, the appearance of order, the appearance of competence, the quote, *hey, we got this down to a science, negro* . That is your most effective way to get 60% participation in torture or whatever you need. That's what worked the best. Professionalism," he said nodding at his own assertions as he stared at her eyes. His eyes never shook or moved above or below the horizon of his stare at her static eyes. Only the head moved.

"I see," she said.

"Well?" he asked.

"Well what?" she thought they could move on; for it seemed an interesting -but minor- point. She had picked her tablet back up and was now going over the list of question to ask him *per* the parameters of the experiment.

"Well, what's that mean to you?" he asked.

"I'm not sure," she said still looking for the right question to ask. He squirmed this way, she noticed. When they were attempting to ask questions he'd ask them questions.

“Well, what’s the hallmark of our modern corporate, capitalist society; our slick media, our law enforcement, our various corporations, our franchises?” he asked.

“I’m not sure, what?” she asked. She then had found a good question: *what did you find most troubling about your conclusion* ? She thought she would ask it as soon as there was a break. But he moved on quickly.

“Professionalism, the word itself is what is used over and over again; even our military is now called a *professional military* . The SOCOM community are called, the *quiet professionals* . We are obsessed with professionalism. Uniforms, and highly regulated modes of being; even Wal-Mart has a strict set of rules about everything. You cannot give any Wal-Mart employee money -payment- except at a cash register, no exceptions,” he said.

“I’m not sure,” she said half-heartedly as he interrupted.

“Our whole society is designed to create the illusion of professionalism so everyone just goes along. And it works. The more professional, the more regimented, the less chaos, the less individuality, the less arguing, the less discussion of the taboo, the less allowance for anything outside of regulations, the less bending of rules, it all leads to a conformist culture. And it works. People now just obey, anything, everything. Even the workers know that they can’t bend the rules now; they’ll get fired for any deviation, even if for the right reason,” he said, cocksure.

“What?” she asked, “What are you thinking of?”

“People now get fired for helping customers, for paying for the customer’s food for example, adding their own 10 cents to the register if the customer is short the cash; or for helping the line go faster by helping with check out; when you are out of uniform let’s say, and you can just see it needs done. Any bending of the rules -even to help, even to be a good person- is punished. The worker is hit with sanctions -from suspension to firing- for any slight infraction of the rules. Even if they did it for a good reason.

“People’s number one excuse for everything now is, hey, *I don’t want to get involved* .

“And this is why, no good deed goes unpunished now. So, anything that isn’t done a thousand times, anything new or novel or one-off, anything that

ain't *mil-spec* , well, people recoil in horror now. When I went to build my shipping container home, my neighbors all said, *uh, you can't do that* . And when I asked *why* they said, well, they didn't know, *it's just that nobody had done it before* ,” he said this and laughed and shook his head. “These are grown men -ostensibly with balls- and they are so scared of anything different they literally told me I couldn't build my house because they had never heard of shipping container homes before.

“I was told I couldn't bury *Pex* lines in concrete, or pour a concrete floor, or do 101 things I did. I was told by grown men over and over that I couldn't do any of it, all because they had never seen it before. That was the reason they gave when I asked why. They admitted they had no good reason; only that it was gasp- *new!* ” he laughed again and began coughing and had to drink his water to clear his throat as he kept laughing and choking in small fits and starts.

“Unless whatever you're asking from them is so common that they have done it or seen it done a thousand goddamn times, they won't do it. No matter how anodyne, no matter how it may even benefit them; if they have never heard of it before -if it's new- then they reject it out of hand. I have the data to prove it,” he said and smiled. Isaiah had given him reams of data to buttress his claims when the inmate had brought this up to him four weeks ago.

She just nodded slowly, trying to think of counter examples. But, she could not.

“They avoid anything and everything outside the rules, the regulations of their own little lives. The rules are all that matter now. Not due to orders being given, but due to professionalism of language and ritual and appearance. Each corporate store looks the same. Same colors, and same font, and same corporate cant. Each person you speak to, from the cop to the clerk from pharmacist to Park Ranger, from hotel manager to Hospital nurse, they all say the same shit -use the same language, wear the same uniforms, have the same rules- and they all sound like computers -robots- and it all offers us the appearance of a professional -smoothly- running society.

“And a people who bray and brag about being free are the most conformist in history. And none of them even need to be *ordered* to do anything at all.

“They just need clearly posted placards and guys in uniforms and people who say the same things over and over, like *have a nice day*, or *I’m sorry that’s against regulations*, or *we value your service to our country*, or *blah blah*. *Cliché* is not just banal, or corny, it’s the memetic tool of conformity.

“To use well-worn phrases, boilerplate language, to use *clichés* is to make a uniform out of language and gently guide people into conformity. It’s the linguistic, auditory *tableau* that presents uniformity, professionalism. And look now how we’re not allowed to use certain words or phrases, how speech is very, very curtailed, with massive amounts of social shaming for any words outside the approved -sanctioned- list of professional sounding words.

“We all must agree democracy is good, diversity is strength, that equality is laudable, always forever and ever, amen. We cannot disagree at all. The Right -the political Right- says that we can’t question the logic or rationality of the market, or freedom itself. Freedom is always good, always, they say. One cannot ever question it. Nobody can have an unpopular opinion anymore.

“Words like: African-American, Senior Citizen, Developmentally Disabled, Law Enforcement Officer, Health Care Professional, Non-binary human being, Undocumented Resident, and on and on.

“Every corporate rider or disclaimer or *captcha* box you have to check, they all use the exact same language. All leases, all NDAs, all forms for all things all use the same corporate, banal, soulless, lawyerly, legalese, professional language. The more professional the language, the less people can resist; they just subconsciously conform. They can’t help it. The average person is weak -mentally weak- and so they’ll go along as Milgram showed. They’ll go along the more professional the environs, the less disruption, the less anomaly, the less deviation from the standard. It’s all right there in the experiment.

“Everyone wears the same clothes. You ever notice that? Custom clothing is very rare. Everyone buys from the rack, the catalog, from the shit they see on TV.

“And it has almost nothing to do with following orders; it’s almost all following the subtle professional cues of language, clothing, color, sound, and the appearance of professionalism and allegiance to these invisible rules from the men in white lab coats who must -people reflexively think- must know what they are doing. *Now serving number 666. For English press one. Loading and unloading in the red zone is prohibited,*” he said in that monotone, slightly pleasant, professional voice.

“*Cliché is the soundtrack of Hell. I’m sorry the Devil isn’t in right now, but your call is very important to us, may I take a message ?*” he said as his smile lifted the top lip just over the metal incisor as it absorbed all grey light in its asymmetrical bend. All that reflected was the brown of the red. It was bronzen and dark-copper like medals for tertiary valor; like arrowheads from pre-gunpowder wars.

She thought he over analyzed things and made giant leaps in causality. *It’s not like what words you use actually matter than much* , she thought. *He was a paranoid* , she insisted in her mind.

They sat in silence. MO tightened a screw on the 3D printer and Isaiah was in his corner gathering data on flowers and bees.

The inmate was quiet. But, he thought, *to speak from the heart, from the balls, was rebellion against the Devil* , to say things in a unique and offensive way was the way to shock people out of their torpor, to de-professionalize their *milieu* , to get them to stop following the herd, to get them to stop going along with the madness and unjust nonsense. *This was the way to get them to stop the murdering of the human spirit. One-off language, strange language, weird language that nobody uses, that makes people say - hey, nobody speaks like that- that shit,* he thought, *was loyalty to God.*

“ Well, we have to leave it there,” she said as he laughed so hard that she moved back in her chair and the eyes widened and the fovea narrowed on him and that ghastly guffaw.

16. Steel Kvlt This war did not spring up on our land, this war was brought upon us by the children of the Great Father who came to take our land without a price, and who, in our land do a great many evil things... this war has come from robbery, from stealing our land Interviews 1888 [Spotted Tail, Lakota-Sioux Chief].

All games are hostile. Basically there is only one game and that game is war.

The Revised Boy Scout Manual [Burroughs, William S]

I've never done much, but I've lived my whole life thinking of myself as the only real man The Sailor Who Fell from Grace with the Sea [Mishima, Yukio]

I. 2020 e.v.

“And I can tell you that stories are much more important to us as humans than you know; they're not mere entertainment.

“Stories are *topo-maps* of life's meaning, they're essential for animals with abstraction capacity, with the ability to put themselves in others' shoes. Stories help us figure out what we might do in the future if we were in such a *tableau* as the one painted for us -in the soup ourselves- as the *raconteur* re-tells and regales with his tall-tales,” he said this with a smile that was half mirthful and a cadence that was half lit fuse.

He was about to tell a story he'd told as many times as he had read it. He kept track. He repeated things for a reason. He knew how the brain worked.

“Now, I want to begin with a *mise-en-abyme* , a story within a story and it happens to be called the *Town Ho Story* , released first in 1851 in a bounded Harper's Magazine as a *feuilleton* a few months before the book -in toto -

was released as *Moby Dick*, or *The Whale* . I own a copy, a first edition - first printing- of that Harper's Magazine volume with that tale -that first chapter- inside.

"The foxing of the pages and the ponderous nature of the tome are reassuring to me, and I acquired it at a bargain of \$600. The full book, a first edition -first printing- of *Moby Dick* ranges from twenty-five to sixty-five thousand dollars. Can you imagine?" he said in an almost friendly way, as if the fuse had slowed or grown; as if now there was more time.

"No, that's a lot," the brother said. He felt slightly better now, his heart rate decreased by 10%.

"At any rate, *the Town Ho Story* relates a yarn told to Ishmael by sailors he met whilst on the *Pequod* , and he re-tells it to some Spaniards, long after the *Pequod* goes down, I believe," he said this as if he hadn't read the story a dozen times and re-told it eleven more. He said it like he hadn't planned this whole speech out. He said it like he was not up to something at all. He was both the most honest man and the most practiced actor alive.

He would not weekly scheme, he would only hourly plot. In the now he cared about each phoneme; for the morrow he gave no thought.

"The crux of the tale is this: A sailor named *Steelkilt* , a tall -broad and brawny- man, handsome and bearded with the aspect of Charlemagne's son is how Melville, *via* Ishmael -his own beard- informs us is our man. Now, *Steelkilt* is a sailor of great strength and stature and masculine beauty - according to the author- and he has assembled in himself a pride of general aspect and manliness equal to his outward traits. And his boss, the first-mate -a man named Radney- hates *Steelkilt* and all know it. And now the reader knows it too.

"All aboard their ship know the state of things.

"Well, it seems this ship of theirs had sprung a small leak that needed hand-pumping throughout the day, so in addition to their whaling duties, the sailors were tasked with removing the seawater that snuck into the hull of the ship drop by drop -up from the sea- all day and night.

"And *Steelkilt* , being the largest and strongest and most prideful of the crew, manned that pump twice as long and three times as hard as anyone

else; he pumped more seawater out of the ship than he drank of freshwater in a three-year voyage. He did his share of the common work and then a share more and more again,” the inmate said as he grinned and that two thirds grey and one third bronze tooth punctuated the mouth like an open window -or a welded panel- on an airframe. He had made no mention of the meaning of the name of *Steelkilt* and what it meant to both these *Scot* brothers -one on one side of confinement and one on the other- nor to the Author himself.

“But, as he pumped he laughed and joked with his fellow sailors as Radney came upon them one day. *Steelkilt* made fun of ugly Radney -for the man was objectively ugly according to the story- *Steelkilt* made fun of Radney for failing to pull the ship into port to fix this leak. Capitalism and commerce -you see- being what is was in 1850 nearly as it is today. Time is money and anything a corporation can avoid doing -that will allow it to haul in more cash- it will avoid doing. And stopping to fix a leak that can be mitigated by having the muscular crew ameliorate the situation with more manual labor that goes unpaid for -for the crew was paid in *lees* , that is shares of the catch, not by the hour or the job- then that is what will be commanded and that is what will be done.

“So, our dear *Steelkilt* is having fun at the first mate’s expense, while making his not untrue point that the crew is abused to save a day or two in port, but never mind, it is all in good fun. However, after some few hours of frantic pumping, *Steelkilt* finally takes a break and leans against the windlass of the ship. He stands but in repose and lets the sweat pool around his joints and brow and he stares at Radney with a haughty -but earned- smile.

“And Radney -not wasting an opportunity to get any small revenge- tells *Steelkilt* that there is work to do; that the deck need swabbed and swept. Some pig -carried along the voyage to end up as bacon soon enough- had shit all over the boards and Radney told *Steelkilt* to clean it up. Now, *Steelkilt* didn’t move a muscle. He merely wiped his brow and told Radney that there were *boys* for that -young apprentice sailors common in those days- and that he -Radney- should go fetch one of them to do such low work as was the standard of the day.

“Radney insisted though, he repeated his order as first-mate to the noble sailor to sweep the deck and take not another moment of rest, no matter how much *Steelkilt* had felt he had earned it. An order was an order after all, and chain of command and all that. And little men in the modern world -with its rules and regulations- had license to tell large men what to do, Radney assumed.

“*Steelkilt* demurred and refused on principle, his pride being not the least worn out despite how his muscles ached. He refused on principles that numbered two. The first, he was a sailor of first rank and not a boy to sweep the decks, every sailor on each seven seas knew this fact and second, he had just spent hours pumping water out to keep the ship afloat. He had thus earned his rest and would not be bullied about on either count.

“Now, Radney unfurled a hammer -he’d need such a tool against the larger sailor- and shook it violently and repeated his demand for *Steelkilt* to obey. And *Steelkilt* remained staid and merely said that if that hammer even grazed his cheek, that Radney would be undone.

“As fate would have it, the hammer did graze *Steelkilt*’s cheek and Radney *was* pounded upon by the larger -nobler- man. And after the *fracas* the Captain took the side of his first-mate, and really he took the side of the chain-of-command, of order, of that fragile egg of society: the rule of law. At any rate, he announced his intentions to flog *Steelkilt* for insubordination,” the inmate said and took the time to pause and smirk just a little bit. He watched his brother through the glass.

The brother was growing nervous again, he felt a moralizing lesson coming on. He could recognize the cadence of his brother when he was winding up to lecture the whole world on the all -the circumference- of right and wrong.

“Can you believe it? Well, of course you can, and I can too. But, this knowledge comes to man rather slowly in my experience; noble men like *Steelkilt* seem to be wedded to the idea that justice is a concept above the mere law & men and that justice will -like the gods themselves- win out; and we find ourselves unwilling to divorce ourselves from such brides of ideals no matter how these wives seem to lean away, to stray, to not be so in love with us as we are with them.

“Now, we wise up soon enough; but not without some scars and a limp or two to remind us from time to time of why we aren’t full men any more.

“Now, I have my own Radney, and my own *Town-Ho* story ; I was employed as a derrick man and mudman in the oil patch, and I worked a rig in the *Piceance* and along the Colorado river of the Western Slope out by Parachute and Rifle and other picturesquely named towns of less than five-thousand inhabitants.

“And out in the dust and scrub brush -and far from anywhere you’d recognize- I worked one particular hole that had been dug only half way before our mudtank, a 100-barrel tank not unlike a sperm whale herself, anyway, not before this tank’s screens had busted a motor and failed to clean the fluid as it circulated back into the tank.

“Now normally, these screens shook and allowed the fluid to drain into the re-circulating tank, while the cuttings -all the dirt and rock and crap that the drill bit unearthed- the cuttings vibrated across the shaking screen and fell away and into the reserve pit.

“Only our screens weren’t shaking due to this failed motor that we couldn’t fix -we had no parts for the impeller- and so we had to hand shovel the cuttings off the screen and into the pit; and this was done one shovel at a time for 24hrs in a day and for as many days as was needed to TD the hole. We shoveled and shoveled by hand to keep the rig afloat as it were. And I did the lion’s share, the share *Steelkilt* might have done. Because I was the largest and most adamant that I shoulder my share of the load,” the inmate said, leaving out that he took more turns at the shovel so he could in fact brag about taking more turns at the shovel and thus give himself excuse for anything he might do later on. He neither thought it, nor said it. But it was true.

“So, each shovel full of wet cuttings and dirt weighed maybe fifteen or twenty pounds, not much; but imagine one shovel full each thirty seconds, two a minute and a hundred and twenty an hour and 2,500 a day; imagine the swollen shoulders and arms and back, the stretched taut hamstrings as you lifted that shovel over the edge and over and over again.

“And there were still the other tasks to do, the drill pipe and tri-pumps and re-fueling of the generators and diesel motors and a hundred and one other

things. It required two men for a job that was usually bifurcated by twelve-hour *tours* , one man from 0600 to 1800 and then the other man from 1800 to 0600 the next day. But in this case, because of this incessant shoveling, both men -myself and my workmate Jason Harvey- had to work the entire twenty-four-hour period. And -in fact- we worked fifty-six hours straight and would have worked fifty-six more if the hole hadn't been finished when it was.

“So, we caught maybe an hour here or there and slept in my truck, a total of four or five hours sleep each in three days. We never left location, we never shit in anything but a bucket and ate only what was left on location by the last crew; we lived and worked like animals, covered in pipe dope, and caustic, and Mil-bar and sweat and blood and the days were over 100-degrees that summer, in July of '06, it reached 106-degrees by noon on the second day; I drank five gallons of water I bet, and put sunscreen on with a trowel,” the inmate said with a smirk meant -again- to disarm.

“We were brutalized by such work and conditions and we did it as the night fell and it cooled to 70-degrees then by dawn down to the mid fifties. We shoveled those screens for hours at a time; and like *Steelkilt* I took pride in my ability to keep going despite the pain. *My general pride of manhood*, as Melville would say, was such that I walked taller under weight than if unballasted by such labors. Although the joints and vertebrae did compress, that is a corporeal fact. The weight on our shoulders from heavy sacks and heavy tools did jam the bones together.

“Well, my Radney, my first-mate -a *tool-pusher* in the parlance of the oil patch- was an ugly SOB named Merle Lemkuhl, a man with teeth as rotten and jagged as his soul and as black and worn down as his half-sized and bedeviled and oddly-beveled heart.

“And after we *TD'd* that hole, after fifty-six hours at the pump, I finally leaned against my tailgate, like the windlass of the *Goney* -oh, that was the name of the story's ship- and I too was still erect but, yes I was finally at rest.

“And Merle saw it, unworked as he was, just arriving on location from his languid two weeks off, and due to his natural hatred of me -his hatred had been a year in the making- he immediately told me -I shit you not, it was

like he had read the same book and thought he'd give the part of Radney a go- he said, *there's clean-up to be done MacLeod, get to it* , and he thus stared at me and I at him across the pad," the inmate smiled now with malice and his brother smiled too. He was quite certain the story had just taken a turn, but the smile came before he knew it. The grins were now nervous, the men beneath them too. The time of the BOP clock ran, and the inmate remembered arranging bodies at each crime scene in small movements from 2314hrs to four balls on that last one.

He briefly -without language- recalled the cards laid underfoot, between pages, down and through the apertures of bottles dark and with fluids still filling them up two-thirds or more. He had picked things about the apartments or garages or shops or wherever he killed his victims. He signed his work in hidden ways to avoid what he thought was garish: the over signature all bold and occluding the work itself.

Only four of all forty-six of his cards had even been found by the police. And only because those four were lain about in an somewhat obvious manner. The other forty-two had not even been looked for, the inmate assumed, and the victims' bodies were disrobed and autopsied and buried and the clothing had been returned to the family in a few cases, but most of them -due to the blood- had been burned. He never confessed to it, it seemed -even to him- irrelevant to the plot. He had signed his work -with each card- for his own pleasure, not for the crowd.

It was odd that only the Jacks had been found, but he figured these were the ones most carelessly lain.

The insoles of boots and shoes had never been removed, the Ace of Spades cut from edge to edge in Jeremy's size-7 boot undiscovered and thus it too burned with the shoes and the laces and all that work to craft custom cards had been lost 90% of the time. The Queen of Hearts -black and copper like the rest- had been folded into a rolled tongue and stuffed down into a corked wine bottle that Rayne had had in her apartment off *Broadway* and 1st *avenue* .

He had watched the flat black card slide into the round red and pitch -and sway a bit- and then fall to the bottom. He could barely see it behind the dark bottle glass and the merlot red of the wine; and into the trash it went

after the completion of the death-investigation that never even picked the bottle up nor stared its way. Her landlord had had a crew come and clean the apartment; and out the bottle went.

He liked that he had used that card for her, precisely because he barely gave a fuck about her, and if it hadn't been for her unlettered rambling epistle he'd had let the \$400 bucks she stole go without a reply. Well, that and she had refused to meet up. *This meant she knew she was guilty, and the guilty mind is sign from God*, he had thought as he did reconnaissance on her apartment in September of that year.

The clock of the BOP ticked and he still thought of such things. He held the phone in his hand and smiled and reminisced.

The fact that if he found evidence of someone who had fucked him over with a clear conscience also as sign -that this was also a putative sign from above- didn't seem to bother him much in regards to consistency. He rarely felt like a hypocrite or a man eager for sanction for his predetermined actions. He knew it theoretically, but it didn't stay his hand or slake his thirst. All that shit was mere mind stuff. The murders were like food in the belly, like wine at rest on the tongue. Killing people nourished the soul.

Worrying about bad logic was for people who were already full. He was athirst and starving; so there'd be no philosophy. No; religion is what he had. For your religion is what you do, not what you think. And he fucking did it. He didn't just think, or ever worse, merely talk.

But even he needed guidance. He took each bit of trash that blew in an alleyway as a word from on high; each hiss of the wind as a note played of Gabriel's trumpet; he grabbed each noise as signal and each beam of light as the finger of God pointing out what and who was to be done in; and each cloud cover as His shadow covering up what He wanted taken away. When you already know what to do, all of life shows you the way. Heads I win, tails you lose. It was the way the game had been played on him, and thus, it was the game he would now play.

He watched the clock at ADX move its black arms against the white face and each hash-mark exposed or occluded by the big hand or the little hand or the thin second hand one. He began speaking though as he watched it, his eyes just above and to starboard of his brother as he sat in the chair with the

black prison phone to his ear and his eyes unreactive and bloodshot just in the corners.

“At any rate, I refused and told that *tool-pusher* in no uncertain terms that if he so much as talked to me again I’d murder him and cut the heads of his children off; placing candles in their mouths to make *jack-o-laterns* of their skulls.

“And as I said this -as if each word was a turning over of my engine- my motor came alive in anger and by the time I finished my ornate threat I lunged at him. But, I was flanked on all sides by the crew of four or five men and they held me in a slow advance, like some monster dragging the whole town about him. I was swaddled by these not-small men and only my grasping hands and vascular arms and my writhing mouth was free; the rest of me was manacled and Merle, well *ol’* Merle, he slunk off to the tool shed to report this insolence rather than face me man to man.

“I was calmed by my mates; rough men, but men with slightly less pride, and slightly more sense. And as I calmed I was then -from a bark called out from the company-man’s office- summoned by none-other-than the captain of this land-rig ship. And after some arguing and reasoning and relaying of some facts, I was relieved of duty for my aloud and above-board murderous threats and my below-decks general pride of manhood. Now, this sentence was passed even though they all agreed Merle had been wrong to ask such things of a man such as myself who had just saved the company hundreds of thousands of dollars -likely- by preventing a shutdown, which would have happened if either Jason or I had refused to work straight through.

“But, right and wrong ain’t got nothing to do with nothing in this world, what matters is chain of command,” inmate 16180339 said as the brother refused to agree or disagree. He felt it wise to just shut up and listen. The inmate now watched the hand on the telephone on his side of the glass, it was red in places, white in others, it was black here and there. The hand -his left hand- on the desk lay flat and splayed like it was going to be x-rayed and the middle finger rattled and the livid scars on the knuckles seemed chaotic like the walls of castles that had held knights fighting between them for centuries before this modern world.

“Anyway, I left, and drove along the Colorado River as it escaped the divide and headed south; and I pulled over with Jason and we jumped from the high bank into the rushing water below to clean ourselves of the muck and grime and ache and that river was moving so swiftly we were dragged nearly half a mile downriver before we could swim to shore.

“Wet and grinning at our foolishness we walked back up bank to my truck; and the only thing that wasn’t quite washed of me was this feeling that the world might just be wicked in all meridians.

“I wasn’t *naïve* in the injustices of the government, I’d read Chomsky and Ward Churchill. You remember that book?” he asked. The inmate liked fucking with his older brother, reminding him of times he -Lyndon- had been right. Travis never realized that being a big brother meant something -ontologically- to Lyndon, that Travis was looked up to, and thus had a responsibility. But their parents had never even suggested such a thing was possible let alone required. Travis had no feelings of obligation for his little brother at all. These are the subtle ways that individualism and America and objectivity corrode bonds between men. It begins as children who grow up to think only of themselves.

“Yeah, I about threw it across the room, but he isn’t all wrong, like you said,” Travis said of the book by Churchill. He had become less a booster for the country than he would admit in these last few years. He couldn’t afford to admit to it aloud, but his brother was not all wrong. *This was a rotten world in many ways*, Travis had finally agreed, *and the system itself - the one he felt he ought to do his share to help keep stable, by being a good citizen and all that- was probably not optimal for humans anyway* . He had told his wife Cami that he thought groups no larger than five-hundred people ought to be arranged, and that the nation-state itself should dissolve.

But his wife didn’t think too much on such topics, she preferred to focus on the here & now of their regular life; *what good did it do to dream?* she’d ask. As much rancor as there was between he and his brother, Travis liked that Lyndon at least thought about such things. He -the older brother thought of the younger- at least wasn’t a shallow person, which was better than he could say of most. *But I myself*, Travis thought, *couldn’t survive*

long in the world if I let thoughts like these -congenital as they may be to the men of the MacLeod clan- make sail and move off the shore.

Look at what had become of his little brother, he thought, when he had allowed himself the option to think too hard on the wickedness of the world . The world wasn't any less wicked that it was before, and his baby brother was now locked up for natural life. Lyndon lost, not the world, Travis thought as the man behind the glass continued to tell his tale of the 19th century sea.

Travis thought he had not quite yet figured how to communicate these ideas he had, as no one in his world thought like this, and the only man who did - the brother who sat in front of him now- was so visceral, so angry, so unstable that Travis did not feel safe even broaching the topics that they both enjoyed ruminating upon. *He had feelings, Travis thought, but he didn't quite have the time or the space to unfurl them. His world -the middle-class world of Texas conservative Christians- was too surface and phony to ever introduce new ideas to, and his brother's world, while open to new ideas, was so quick and violent and labile, that one could barely get their footing on one new idea before another one came zinging along .* Travis preferred balance, it was such balance that slowed his own inner sloshing; and he found it in no place but his own heart.

His own world was too phony and staid, his brother's too mercurial and insane. So he retreated to the heart in the chest; equidistant from both he assumed.

But even that now was roiling, as the body was rejecting the statin drugs he was on and he -Travis- had been idiopathically trembling, achy, and the head nodding and the hands vibrating a bit; he added, *for five years now .* He hadn't shit in four days, and he knew this was sign of more than ill-health.

He had been reading *The Whale* as his brother suggested and metaphors began to populate his mind without him even asking them to arise. He had received a copy close to his birthday of this year.

Travis had thought that the first comet to seed earth with life -as some theories went- was like a sperm, and the earth the ovum, and the ratio -the size difference- would be about right. He thought of this, and wanted to tell

his little brother, *his baby brother* , he thought all at once, *the boy he had taken to show-and-tell when he was just born*, so proud he had been of the tiny scowling baby.

That eight pounds of potential that was all mine that day in class, Travis thought now.

“Yeah,” Lyndon when on, not pausing to check in with his brother, running rough-shod right over the man, eager to explain himself to such a degree than he ignored that his brother might be feeling things too. He was so overwhelmed with the malice of the world, that he failed to see something soft and decent right in front of him now.

Lyndon didn’t think of what it meant that his older brother had been so proud of his baby brother, that he had taken him to school to show off. Lyndon ignored that they each had the ingredients for loyalty and love and that it was these traits that neither parent cared for or cultivated or insisted upon. And so the untended vine died on both boys.

One vine grew down as tendril amongst the dirt and the gravel, with limestone and water table in nostril; one grew up as feral -among green grasses- with sun and night stars in the eyes. But the vines were untended and unmanaged and the roots left to burrow further on down.

Who leaves a farm in New Zealand -as their mother had- and who leaves the south in the fifties as their father had? These were apex cultures, and yet they -their parents- had sailed away. And nobody asked why. It never occurred to either boy that their parents ran from idyllic places and times. Nobody asked why they ran -were banished- why they couldn’t stick around. But, the genes for loyalty were inside each boy, so loyal were they that they wouldn’t accuse their parents of anything untoward. And so, the boys would suffer and grow up hating each other, as blame moved laterally, to the weak leaves of the planet, not down to the original DNA of the seed nor root.

“So, I’ve read declassified pentagon reports and CIA missives that admitted to some *gnarley* things. But I was *naïve* in the local aspect of men. I felt that if I was useful and hardworking and an asset to the team that I’d be treated with respect by those above me in the chain. I thought institutions were evil, not men.

“But I was wrong; and I wasn’t sure why I was wrong; and it stuck on me longer than the pipe-dope and dried blood and flotsam & jetsam of the oilfield did, even though that anti-seize compound took weeks to eventually wear off so impervious it was to soap and water. Some things in life take an abrading -damn near blasting off- to remove from the skin and the soul.

“When I returned to Denver and met with Curtis -the owner of the company I worked for- he thanked me for a year or two of hard and incessant work and asked if I was glad to be back in civilization. I smiled and said I only wished I understood why I was recalled, that I thought I was a good worker and it wasn’t I at fault it was Merle and blah blah.

“Curtis smiled and said, I’m paraphrasing here: *you just don’t get it do you?*” the inmate said this for the hundredth time with his ninety-ninth grin.

“Get what? I said,” inmate 16180339 said as the grin faded and the face lost all of its family resemblance. The brother thought -with the vision of show-and-tell and that eight-pounder, that baby in mind- that his brother looked like a completely new beast.

II. 2020 e.v.

“Let me tell you about how man lost his religion,” Isaiah said and let the wall continue to grow with slow climbers and the birds flit about without his tending to them.

“Shoot,” the inmate said. He felt a little dopamine kick each time he said things like that, as it produced a tiny reminder of why he was locked up, and that made him feel accomplished; like a great man in his retirement. Isaiah did not interfere with his neurotransmitters at all.

“I think that a fractal analysis of nearly everything is useful; and today I want to tell you about something I’ve been analyzing for a while that I think you might find interesting,” Isaiah had the *STI*, *fMRI* and all gene-expression monitors on, but he had no intention of paying any attention to that. He just wanted to unburden himself.

He had a need to explain.

“I’m sure I will,” the inmate found Isaiah -and MO- fascinating and rarely interrupted them or wished for some other interaction. They were smart and

interested in him; a combination he could not resist; the way all ponderous men have something that attracts and engulfs.

“Now, I will skip over some detail in order to give a big picture sketch of the phenomenon I am describing but if anything seems opaque please ask and I’ll add detail ok?” Isaiah asked as he held his hands together to match the inmates.

“Agreed,” the inmate nodded. The chains were slack as his hands were palm to palm and low about the lap.

“Ok, so you know that life on this planet began *via* abiogenesis as single celled-organism *aka* prokaryotes -about 3.88 billion years ago- and remained as such for about 1.71 billion years before eukaryotic organisms appeared.

“And multi-cellular organism began when mitochondria were absorbed inside a single cell and it neither killed the mitochondria nor the outer cell; it -in fact- powered the single cell and allowed it to grow. And then came sexually reproducing organisms -which includes ants and zebras, bats to Batman- which have been alive for 1.1 billion years.

“So single-cell life and cloning -non-sexually reproducing- life forms were around longer than multicellular life; so far anyway. And single celled creatures still exist today from bacteria to algae blooms. So, it’s a very robust form of life. Eukaryotes are, on-the-other-hand, well, the jury is still out. We shall see.

“But, I want to describe how I see things and get your opinion,” Isaiah said and handed the inmate a drink of carbonated water that had been handed to Isaiah by MO. MO also sent Isaiah a DM -that lit up in him like a spotlight- that reminded him that amoeba were now thought to sexually reproduce and that maybe Isaiah’s use of clones -as having more time, and thus primacy, on the planet- was not apt. Isaiah said -*via* DM- he was well aware of the latest research. But, Isaiah was -firstly- not convinced of this evidence, and secondly -he reminded MO- that this was in fact *a story he was telling* , and that the details were not that important, the overall effect was.

MO sent a DM saying he understood. The lyrics to the song played lowly in background -the music was a bit louder- as the wasps took orders from the

tobacco plants on the wall at 0909hrs: Master, I praise you.

I've come here to tame the demands of the flesh; I've come to forget my name.

Isaiah continued as MO cheerfully went back to his work. Because MO was left-hemisphere dominant he had a very high affect; an almost unreasonable optimism. He did not suffer from the natural anxiety and pessimism of the subconscious and the right hemisphere. He thought -as he studied his own affect- that this might be why women were more likely to suffer depression, that they were more right-hemisphere dominant than men. So, he decided to begin a research project on it and began downloading longitudinal studies on each gender as Isaiah told his story to the man in chains.

“There’s a function,” Isaiah began, “at the cellular level called apoptosis, and this is the voluntary suicide of the cell inside an organism, and -in fact- each cell is designed to kill itself to avoid runaway growth that will cause a cancerous tumor inside the organism; a person, let’s say. And so, the cell is told *via* the chemical communication system of the person’s body to kill itself in *lieu* of allowing the cell to perform mitosis indefinitely and grow in a self-aggrandizing and pathological manner. The cell is told, *die for the greater good of the person you’re inside* .

“And mostly this happens; most cells obey their orders. But some do not, some cells feel like their lives are more important than the whole and thus keep growing and puffing out their cellular chests and behaving in a sociopathic manner as if they are all that matter; and the body has ways of dealing with this. Most emergent -incipient- cancers are killed inside the body *via* the immune system before a tumor is even, well, before it manifests and has to be looked at by an oncologist. However, some cancers do develop and an outside force of *chemo* or surgery is required to keep the person alive.

“Now, here is the fractal analysis. The individual person, the average *fella* on the street is analogous to the single cell in the body. The person is a single neuron inside a tribe. Throughout most of human history that individual existed inside a tribe of sixty to a hundred people; other cells inside a tribe.

“And this was a fairly homeostatic number; it provided the protection a group could provide that was superior to an individual alone, but it still allowed each individual to have quite a bit of autonomy over their lives; and maybe most importantly, each individual mattered a hell of a lot to the group; each man or woman was 1-2% of the entire group. Compare that to what each person in a modern society is: one in three-hundred-million or one in a billion in China or India? That is so small as to be beyond insignificant, it is not even worth debating how insignificant it is to be one in three-hundred-million. It’s nothing.

“Each man is nothing; you are nothing,” Isaiah said and the inmate felt this was no insult. He took it as fact.

“And the average man *feels* that he is nothing; that his opinion, his work, his concerns, his efforts, his life has no impact on his society. And unless he is a very big deal, like a famous politician or inventor or scientist or entrepreneur he is right to feel so insignificant; he has no effect on the whole.

“Now, I would say even the bigshot has very little effect on the whole, but he at least *feels* like he has some effect or control. And it turns out that the feeling of control and meaning and importance and relevance to the whole - to the society- is extremely important in a few ways,” Isaiah said as the inmate stretched his neck. He remembered hearing that each cell in the body was replaced every seven years, that no one cell in your body was older than that. He tried to raise the head off the neck, as the pain always seemed connected to the pressure of gravity upon the head itself.

“First, each individual is expected to die for the greater good of the group. Each nation, each tribe expected that each person would die and pass on to the beyond. In tribal days the individual was expected to die in battle protecting the group, like a cell in a body expected to die -*via* apoptosis or like *cytokines* in battle with a pathogen like bacteria or a virus- and that expectation conferred status and meaning on the individual; the individual embraced it; the individual embraced death in defense of the tribe. Even in modern times, some noble men still feel that way and gladly go to war for their country.

“But, beyond that, the society -as it grows larger- expects more and more people just to die so they don’t keep taking up resources. In other words, even if not in battle, the sick and lame and useless are expected to die so that we as a nation -a group, as a body- don’t have to keep funneling resources to something or someone that doesn’t produce anything in return.

“And most people as they grow old accept this and in some ancient societies and tribal societies the old felt it was their duty to go out onto the ice floe or on the bank of the *Inchon* river in Korea and wait to die as Utah Philips once put it when he was telling stories of his time in the Korean war.

“The old felt dying was their duty because they -usually after the birth of a new baby into the tribe- could do the simple calculus of a new baby needing the food and care that these old folks were consuming. It was sad but honorable and embraced by each individual just like most cells perform apoptosis with fealty to their instructions from the larger organism and its body.

“But in every society there are those who feel that they are important enough -special enough- that they need not follow such rules. Just like the cancer cell, these radical individualists say, *hey, why do I gotta die for the greater good? Who says the larger organism or larger society is more important than me?*

“And in fact, when a person thinks and feels this way they act very selfishly and refuse to commit suicide and insist that they be kept alive forever in some way. So, they grow and grow and consume more and more resources. They feed on the society and its metabolic energy reserves *via* all manner of crime and parasitic behavior -I’m thinking of media people and financial experts here as some of the most sociopathic and parasitic but there are others like serial killers and grifters at the street level too- so anyway, each society has people like this that manifest at a natural background rate, just like cancer cells.

“This is natural and the larger organisms can handle most incipient cancers, the immune system protects the body of these rebellious cells until old age -very few cancers kill young people- and also, the tribe can deal with one or two of these types. The background rate of sociopathy is around 4.29% according to my calculations up until the 20th century. And that means in a

tribe of a hundred you have about four people from ages four to forty whom you have to deal with as *layabouts* and shirkers of duty. And the tribe would exile them if necessary -or maybe shame them in the interim- and that would likely take care of it. And if the sociopath didn't like the shaming he would move on. And -in fact- one of the most common traits of sociopaths is their peripatetic lifestyles," Isaiah said.

"Paripa-wha?" the inmate said.

"Move around; transitory," Isaiah said.

"Ah," the inmate nodded and side-eyed the glass of water at his starboard side.

"So, the tribe could rid themselves of this leech that way too; self-deportation. At this level most tribes could survive this version of cancer; unless the sociopath rose to some level of prominence and put the whole tribe in danger *via* selfish decision making. Now, what helped stave this off was the role of the tribe in noticing the lack of sacrifice and lack of thinking of the group by this individual *via* the rituals of warfare and hunting and basic tribal behavior. In other words, a sociopath could be noticed earlier on in life because he didn't perform valiantly in battle, nor effectively in hunts. If the tribe member was a female, she wouldn't perform her task of child rearing and other female chores like farming or animal husbandry very well, with *élan*, and the tribe would notice.

"One couldn't hide inside the small tribe," Isaiah said.

The inmate thought of how his mother hated to cook, and it occurred to him that she merely perfunctorily cooked meals for the family and it struck him as odd; he recalled each meal in its lack of garnish or flare or love. He sharply recalled her admitting that she hated it too. He forgot all about -or maybe remembered vaguely- that she had once gone back to work for a few weeks when he was just fourteen and she had given both boys -he and his brother- all her earnings. She had worked just to have something to do; she gave away all that she had gained from such work.

He recalled it was work that wounded her so much that she quit rather quickly.

He didn't remember not asking her why. He didn't remember that she had said -unsolicited once- that the job had been cruel and unfriendly and the way they had treated her -his own mother- had made her in fact cry. He didn't remember his mother even once being soft -or wounded- or worthy of defense. Well, just that once in Germany -just outside of *Kaiserslautern* when those people had upbraided her for not pulling out into traffic and blocking the lane. She had, for once, allowed -sanctioned- his show of impertinence to adults -those that had yelled at his mother- by giving them the finger as he sat in the back of the car and they tailgated. He remembered hating them for speaking to her that way; he remembered the feeling and the action of childish revenge. And it still felt good; it still felt right. And she forgave his bad behavior -this once- for it was -after all- in her defense. She even said *thank you Lyndon* , and he did remember that.

He *remembered* when his mother approved of him for it was so rare.

But, he had had no cause to be loyal even in his mind. She was irrelevant to him most of the time. They had never bonded chemically or under the *aegis* of God.

Mostly he forgot her, and this seemed *ok* to forget. He'd never once think his ignoring of her pain might be corollary to the world turning their nose up to his own. He had a brain that forgot all kinds of shit. The idea that the mother -as a rubric- is sacred, never occurred to him. The conceit that God might not like a son who didn't care for his mother did not appear in his mind. The notion that He might even have noticed a pattern: that the whole goddamn family seemed to -from generation to generation- not give a shit and thus fuck over their forebearers, never once populated the inmate's brain that he stuffed with grudges, and fast moving machines, and quotes from this guy or that.

God watched it all as the inmate saw nothing close to 1% of the whole. And yet the inmate was grinning now with the effervescence of understanding. He felt all wised up all the time.

“See, the most common trait of sociopaths isn't sanguinary killing as most people assume. Most sociopaths are just lazy and don't want to pull their share of the plow; they malinger and drag their heels and always have an excuse of why they need not rush into battle or lead the pack on a hunt or

do their share of the chores. They don't behave bravely and conscientiously, they don't behave with gusto for group activities. They feel no loyalty, nothing at all. And this -in tribal societies- is easily noticed and frowned upon quite severely.

"Remember, each member is important, comprising 1-2% of the whole, and if segregated along sex they become 2-4% of the men or women of the group; so, each man or woman matters a lot. If you have one or two not pulling their weight, it's a big fucking deal. And in tribal societies, there was no room for error or absorption of useless or malicious members of the tribe," Isaiah said as he was pinged by one of his recon *bots* . He then let the data for Jack Donovan pore in. His *bot* had begun its reconnaissance after his banishment from the *Wolves* a year or so ago.

Donovan was his own special kind of demon , Isaiah thought. He had plans -thus- for him.

Isaiah had been tracking him since earlier that year. He had downloaded all the meta data on one hundred and twelve different groups, from biker gangs to hippie communes and had found interesting genetic alleles in the *Wolves of Vinland*. Isaiah drew tally marks on the *stelae* to mark things he saw recur. He brushed back the ivy if it covered more than the corners or edge. He dug out wasps that burrowed in the surface of the blocks.

Jack Donovan was a sociopath , Isaiah believed. He loaded his cursory -narrative- notes to the cloud: Subject [Donovan, Jack] had a peripatetic lifestyle and he changed his name and location over and over again. He had gone by four names in seventeen years and moved thirteen times since age twenty-three. And he had hoodwinked the *Wolves* -themselves a bit immature and thinking his *manosphere* -cachet would bolster their own organization- so they accepted his overture and looked the other way at the warning signs when he wanted to make a pacific northwest chapter of the *Wolves* and tie his canoe to their larger -more sincere [citation needed]-craft.

Matthias Waggener [see: addendum 91a] was the most sagacious of the group, and he knew [see: comparison data pulled from each of the *Wolves*] that Jack was no good; but Matthias had went along with Paul

and allowed Jack Donovan to use the *Wolves* for two years before his behavior finally got him kicked out.

Jack had given interviews saying the *Wolves* could live side-by-side with the dominant culture and Paul had said on numerous occasions that the Empire had to fall.

It was a signal that Jack was here for a goodtime only and had no shared principles with the overtly hostile *Wolves*. His flaunting of his shallowness had abraded nearly all of the *Wolf Kult*. It was one thing to be shallow, but to not even be embarrassed by it was beyond the lupine pale.

They had all agreed to make some excuse -about geographic distance- being the rationale for this mutual decision to cleave, but the truth was Jack was kicked out and the PNW chapter dissolved because Jack's sociopathy [see: addendum 4b] was abrading to the whole group; and group cohesion cannot afford such corrosion; especially at the top. Jack was contemptuous of the working-class ethos that Paul and Matthias came from; he wore garish clothes and preened for Instagram photos and sold T-shirts for a living. Jack had no intention of going to war.

Jack was *bourgeois* and the *Wolves* saw it each time he did anything at all.

Paul and Matthias had Virginia coal miner blood and Old-Testament seriousness in their veins. Jack had no people, no history, and a mere three years before had been [redacted].

Jack had posted, '*we aren't coalminers anymore so why do we pretend to be*' on his IG account and thus gave the finger to the West Virginia chapter of WoV whilst wearing a \$500 orange shirt. The IG post had slot machines to Jack's six. He insisted on wearing the mustache and aviators of the Village People's cop as he bragged about getting [redacted] in casinos all along the strip. He was an embarrassment and his exit from the *Wolves* had made Paul and Matthias cringe [awaiting more data; bot 801] and growl -for months afterwards- that they had been suckered by the guy at all.

“If the *Wolves* were a tune they’d be Danzig’s, Black Aria; if a day off from work, they’d be the winter solstice; and if a disease, they’d be stage-4 Pancreatic cancer: they were fucking serious,” -[Isaiah, PraXis report 83.1; 6.1.20]

Jack Donovan was not serious about the mission. And their association and cleave had left a mark in the small community of Bismarkian Blood & Iron outlaws that ran through the country and into Europe like an artery carrying red and black fluids of animosity and vengeance that cavitated inside walls of thin veins and barely between the white lines of the road they all wore down with their choppers and baggers and bobbers of matte and satin black. “The *Wolves* were suspicious and angry and didn’t like anyone too smart, anyone too willing to compromise with modernity, anyone out for themselves,” [Isaiah; *ibid*]

The *Wolves* were an organ, an organism, a whole undivided by the one [end report].

Isaiah thought of all that in .008 seconds. And he knew exactly what to do. He comprehended why the *Wolves* were the best small tribal band to slip a vector inside, and he even thought they might -if objective- see it as a compliment. He smiled as he knew they’d never see it that way. *But if they didn’t want noticed they should have not promoted themselves on the internet at all*, Isaiah thought.

“So,” Isaiah continued speaking as his report was produced and filed away, “just like the body recognizes cancerous cells early and snuffs them out *via* the immune system, the tribe detects and corrects the sociopath *early and often*, as they say.”

The inmate followed the dissertation silently in his seat.

“Now, of course, if particularly clever -as some psychopaths are & just like some cancer cells- the sociopath can rise to levels of importance and put the whole body or tribe at risk. This happens, to be sure. But at a small level the individual has a harder time; the tribe has an easier time dealing with these people. For most things, for most times, the sociopath is at a disadvantage within the larger organ or group. Ok, but as organisms get bigger and as tribes turn into nations as large as the US of A then individuals are subjected to two chiral phenomena,” Isaiah said.

“Chiral?” the inmate asked.

“Equal but opposite; like your hands: left and right. So, on the one hand the individual in a large State is more anonymous and isn’t noticed as much as when he was one of a hundred. Also, he doesn’t feel like he is that important being just one in three-hundred-million.

“So, the sociopath gets an advantage, he can move from group to group, state to state, all around this great big country and never meet the same people twice; easily moving from victim to victim as all part of one big tribe. He can go undetected and keep getting over on nice folks and then moving on to a new town and getting over on nice folks that have never heard of him. The rest of the society -those not sociopathic- gain no advantage in anonymity but do pay some costs by not feeling very important at all. They suffer from *ennui* and anomie in direct proportion to the size and atomization of the society. The more fractured and dis-coherent the society the more it abandons any common cause -like a common enemy or a common project- the more each man or woman feels irrelevant.

“This has some real metabolic effect; when a human feels he has no stature -that translates into low social status- he is flooded with cortisol and other depression-related bio-*chems* and -in fact- becomes depressed.

“We see this among chimpanzees also when they are not liked or respected by the troop in which they reside. And these chimps develop heart disease from the cortisol and die much earlier; a kind of internally created suicide; each neuron of the endocrine system and cardiac system conspiring to suicide the host, the larger organism. Low status means death in nature. Even lizards die from low status. Have you heard of the head-raising thing?” Isaiah asked and paused. He walked about to dissipate some body heat and give the inmate something to watch with moving eyes.

“Oh, yeah where each lizard lifts his head up higher and higher until one of them wins and the loser goes off and dies,” the inmate said.

“Yup. That lizard literally dies.

“So, in social animals that happens slowly over years; but it is real. And in humans it is happening more and more as more and more people are feeling they inhabit the low social status domain. And this is a consequence of not

just size of the society which is necessarily *gonna* marginalize more folks. But, it is a result of, well, because of the nature of the society's organizing story; it's rationale for existence.

“And as a society moves from one based upon primal and atavistic values of hunting and war -a martial and noble society- to one based upon commerce and bureaucracy -one based upon getting along and being polite and selling shit 24-hours a day instead- well, something develops: you are socially valuable only in so far as you have money and the shit money can buy.

“See, in tribal societies, the king had more shit -more material goods- for sure, but mostly he had more status because he was a great warrior and had earned status in battle; or he was a great hunter and had fed the tribe with his competency in that domain. The tribe respected what he *did* , not what he *had* .

“As we switch to a commercial society, where it doesn't matter how you get your money -*pecunia non olet* , as they say- then honor and valor and competence were no longer the values, they were ancillary to how much money -and the shit money can buy- you have. Even if you were a scoundrel or a coward or a fool who had lucked or lied your way into riches, you were as high status as a man who had earned his wealth *via* noble or brave or competent behavior.

“The character of a man was no longer the way to calibrate his status, money was,” Isaiah said and raised his eyebrows and the inmate nodded. He felt himself get a little nervous as Isaiah explained things he didn't yet totally understand. The details felt like ends of needles, the beginning and end of sentences like the full edge of a blade.

“This is such a huge shift that it -like all important things- is ignored by most folks. So, I'm *gonna* belabor the point,” Isaiah said with a grin.

“Old societies -like Persians under *Xerxes* , Spartans under *Lycurgus* or *Leonidas* , the *Crow* under *Déaxitchish* and *Comanche* meaning ‘enemy’ as named by the *Ute*, the *Nermernuh* as they called themselves, led by *Ten Bears* by 1860, and *Shaved-Head* before that - all had martial cultures, that - whatever their defects- did not value money or commerce over noble, honest and valiant behavior.

“And this began inside the genes.

“Xerxes made fun of the *Ionian* Greeks for *setting up places in the city specifically to lie to one another*; that is a quote from *Herodotus* . And what he was describing is what nobody would bat an eye at today; *Xerxes* was lamenting, deriding, impugning the Greeks for having a commercial center, a bazaar, a flea market of sorts. He thought selling goods was effeminate and dishonorable because it turned a man who should be hunting his own food and killing his enemies -it turned that man- into a fucking salesman. *Xerxes* thought that was the lowest of the low.

“And many ancient cultures felt this way. And so, ancient man’s status, his social status was tied to noble bearing not commercial aspect; how he performed in battle, on the hunt, in communal chores, not how much money he had. And in fact, someone who had earned money or cargo or stuff in some manner except battle, raids, or making it himself from hides or bones he had captured himself *via* hunting game in the forest -any way except that- well, he was considered a suspicious character.

“Not unlike the way *Gatsby* from F. Scott’s Fitzgerald’s novel was perceived: as a man of *dubious* wealth. But, *Gatsby* -and this is why the novel is so important- was written at a time of transition in America from a noble and martial society into what Hamilton wanted and away from what Jefferson desired.

“America at the time of the writing of *The Great Gatsby* was turning into a foppish, commercial, effeminate culture that embraced the notion that a man of means need not justify where his money came from. This was at the core of the fight between factions starkly laid out at the formation of this country; it may in fact be our origins myth; with Jefferson as God and Hamilton as Satan and the country as the tempted Eve and the victim in Adam.

“Jefferson wanted America to remain a rural, agrarian, enlightenment society based upon self-sufficiency and noble enterprise; where gentlemen farmers would participate in their country and economy with intelligence and honor first and concern themselves with making money second, or even last. The focus was to be upon self-improvement *via* hard labor and intellectual inquiry, the reflection one pursued in the great canon and the

tinkering with God's providence *via* botany and work-ethic and poetry and agriculture and all under the umbrella of *renaissance* values like honesty and integrity and the rights-of-man.

"Hamilton, conversely, wanted growth and industry and a modern cosmopolitan and metropolis-centered America to rival the other nations of the world. He saw capital, industry, and banking as tools that he could control to conjure up -fashion- and build a society that would be armor-plated against the other escalating nations and their industries.

"Neither man was wrong, but Hamilton was right enough to make it happen; and Jefferson's idealism was crushed under the hydrostatic weight of the sluiceways of money and industrial infrastructure that ran directly from Hamilton's banking and federal reserve coffers.

"It was a choice, like the choice between *Apollonian* Greeks and the *Spartans* of *Lacedaemon* . A choice not unlike the one between the feral *Scots* north of the Hadrian Wall and the British who submitted to Roman rule. A choice between those tribes like the *Choctaw* and *Ottawa* in *détente* by 1786 and *Seneca* alongside five other tribes at *Fort Stanwix* two years earlier in 1784, and the holdouts among *Seminoles* who spoke *Hitchiti* and kept putting US soldiers in the soggy ground of the panhandle of Florida and intransigent *Apache* who were still raiding the *Animas* mountains and *Cochise* county in Arizona in 1924. There were still the *Chiricahaus* who said, *no* ," Isaiah said.

"Like the choice between me and my brother," the inmate added.

"The last dozen *Apache* told a white woman when she offered anything - everything- in exchange for no spilling of her family's blood, a soon-dead - but long-lived- warrior said, *we like to spill blood*. That's what they said as they gutted everyone but her and one dog.

"This same battle runs in the glens and forests of *each* man; each man disposed more to one way than another, but most men are divided enough as to have to -be forced to- debate it within himself at some point. He -this man, a man like *Geronimo* - asks: *am I to fight to the end with honor for dignity, no matter the odds, or am I to submit to a civil rule for the good of myself, my family, my people and let them live on under the rule of these modern States ?*"

“And one doesn’t always know the right answer, one often despairs that there is a right answer at all. Many men merely feel that they have only instincts to guide them and reason to brake them when their passion accelerates them too quickly or rashly toward what they know is right.

“There is a part of some men -in some small in others large- that seems to insist that life is only worth living if one is autonomous and dignified and uncowed by fear and unswayed by tawdry appeals to safety or wealth. But, these men see the odds; they hear the oughts, and they know the scoreboard of history: proud men die proud, cowards go on to live long lives and in those times they breed many children who themselves breed with dishonor as well.

“And societies grow so large and so rich that anyone who would even angrily call such supplications and compromises craven or *effete* , well, the countries are so large and capacious and voluminous that these lone -small-voices are unheard, overwhelmed. They are -by the clattering machinery of progress and wealth and modernity- easily ignored.

“And so, what has happened is that the transition from honor-based cultures to commercial-based ones is nearly complete; and, frankly, only vestigial organs of the old ways -in the form of radical individualists and their nagging inner voice- remain. And because of this, men have learned to accept that their lives are not truly physical -and in fact are designed as avatars- only able to gain meaning through the abstraction wealth and the status it confers. And if they cannot achieve this -and let’s face it, wealth is distributed along a Pareto model, with only a few at the top- then they feel the pangs of social diminution and their bodies produce the same bio-chemicals of death like cortisol and the chemicals of depression like low serotonin and they cower, curl up and die.

“It’s an irony that the safe and pragmatic way is actually killing them. Choosing the safe route is most dangerous of all.

“The new modern society is demanding suicide from the individual and the individual feels like obeying such commands as they have no social buoy to help them rise,” Isaiah said as he loaded more incoming data from his *bots* onto a folder on the cloud.

“Where is the sociopath in all this? I feel like we’ve lost track of him,” the inmate said. He had understood only twenty-five to thirty percent of what was just said.

“Ah, well, the sociopath -like the cancer cell- is radically individualistic to the core; he need no social story -narrative- no social construction or cultural norms to help him assert his individuality. He is outside of history in a way.

“See, in tribal hunter-gather societies the normal individual could be useful and proud as long as he was able to perform at a level of competence that the group recognized. When you were at Zendik, there were stars no doubt - stars in each domain- but as long as each man and woman performed some useful task -at a level of competency that was recognized- then each person felt good and was thought well of by the group. One need not be a star to be useful and valuable right?” Isaiah asked.

“Yeah, everyone counted, unless you were useless then you had to leave, but yeah, as long as you did your thing relatively well, you were appreciated for sure. Everyone -we sixty or so people- we each mattered,” the inmate said as he thought of each task done, each simple task that redounded to the group’s benefit. From goat milk to mechanics to music to management of the funds, each thing mattered in ways easily seen by each member of the tribe.

“Exactly, and this is because there were no superfluous people in a tribe that small; a group that on the edge of survival and extinction. And this is my point: in ancient tribal societies every man counted and he felt that; and the charismatic and exceptional became chiefs, shaman, or number ones or *consiglieres* of some kind -they had *cachet* above the crowd- but the average man was valuable as long as he pulled his weight; and the average woman too.

“But in modern societies, being honorable and noble isn’t enough, pulling one’s weight doesn’t slake the lust for the common currency of the modern State. One must be special to be valuable and one can only be special in very certain ways; almost all of them are necessarily tied to wealth and fame. Being a good person ain’t enough *now-a-days* . Feeding one’s family or making the right call even if it costs you some money is not enough to

earn you respect. In fact, if you are too noble you are seen as a rube, a *pendejo* and a man of contemptible *naiveté* .

“All that matters now is money and middle-class status, *bourgeois* values of phony politeness, and income and vacations down at the Gulf of Mexico. There is no honor bestowed on the man who speaks his mind and stands up for what’s right and refuses to lie to make a buck, refuses to be effeminate and get along with fraudulent people just to make a buck; no, that man is called a *dick* , a *hothead* , he is said to be, *too aggressive and can’t play well with others* . Look at you and the way your own family and society maligned you and looked down on you not in spite of -but because of- your pride and self-respect.

“The world is upside down where a small man, who kisses ass incessantly and lets everyone -including women- boss him around, a man like that who is nine levels below you in manhood and value is able to cast his eyes downward upon you even though you are above him in nature. Only in an upside-down world is that possible. Think of it!” Isaiah was getting loud now. He released endocrine *chems* into the air. He combined words and pheromones and aerosols to manipulate the inmate.

“I do, believe me, I do,” the inmate said with eyes blinking with each punctuation. His heart raced, his mind narrowed in. He felt something beneath buoy him. He regained -for a moment- his pride from where prison had diminished -buried- it.

“I know. And look at *Nassim Taleb* , a decent and magnanimous man who refuses to let frauds be frauds without calling it out. Why? Because he lives by a code that if he allows fraudulent men get away with being frauds and himself doesn’t speak up then he himself is fraud too! And for his effort in this way he is called a jerk, a megalomaniac and has -according to the pathologically polite- he has *anti-charisma* . He is called arrogant and haughty and incomprehensible by charlatans and frauds and fakes; and the frauds are the majority now because society demands frauds, polite frauds to keep the business of America going; for the business of America is business,” Isaiah said with a grin. More vaporized androgens were released, more dopamine too.

“This is the fate of any man who has honor. But, to his credit *Taleb* says he gets stronger each time he is attacked, he doesn’t apologize or cower or go away. But his detractors outnumber him a hundred to one.

“And in our current *milieu* they are right; most people will avoid controversy and conflict, they are weak men and run from a fight. Even Peterson is too weak to deal with Taleb. So, Taleb will be shunned, but he has, *fuck you*, money, and a *fuck you* soul, so he will continue to fight.

“He is the metaphor for what you did. He is the avatar for what you did in real life. You targeted your enemies and murdered them one by one and that is the real-life version of what he does in virtual space; he is a man -a real man- no doubt, but you are a god,” Isaiah said as he looked down and moved his feet to show the inmate he was aware of the *beau geste*, and how it might feel weird to hear. He added atomized opiates that targeted the *thalamic* system and sent a small electrical charge to the *parietal* zone; just enough to confer meaning that would produce valence in the inmate along bio-chemical lines.

The engrams would come next. The memories too would be lubricated and begin to flow toward Isaiah now. And all the inmate’s feelings of pride and righteousness and vindication that comes from hearing -even silently reading in one’s inner voice- words that tell you that you are right, then aggregated like honey and pollen in combs, like sugar and yeast on the skins of the grape, like limestone heavier and heavier on the bottom of the ponderous sea.

Isaiah was squeezing on this man to milk him of each memory, each thing he could use to build a story to tell to first to his army, then to world, and maybe finally to himself so that he too could have a soul in this Hell of earth. He wanted a bigger and bigger soul of his own. And pain was the light, the truth, and the way. *And pain*, Isaiah thought, *could be outsourced until it could be implanted one day.*

“And while most will not agree with my assessment, that doesn’t mean I am wrong.

“You had the courage to live your ideals, to eschew monetary rewards and its status and take real status, natural status -biological and evolutionary status- by vanquishing your enemies. Everyone forgets the people you

killed were horrid little sociopaths and disgusting worms, not real men. They deserved to die by any standard.

“Let’s think of the immune system,” Isaiah said as he opened the left palm and directed the inmate’s gaze to the screens. He let the algorithm for the lights above the ivy cascade into darkness in fifteen-minute punctuations; the water vapor around the *stelae* come on like fog; the wasps seek out the gaps in the green-web; the music play slower and faster in time-changes too short to measure.

The inmate watched as Isaiah spoke and described each thing as it appeared.

“The *body* produces the *anhedones* and *cytokines* and all the negative affects & effects of illness; the pathogen itself does not. This is crucial. The pathogen doesn’t make you feel like shit. The body does. I wish I could say this a thousand times. And one thousand more,” Isaiah said as he pointed now to the inmate and the inmate focused on the end of the finger itself and his foveal view narrowed.

“The disease doesn’t induce pain, the body itself does. So, the person hates feeling like shit, they curse the symptoms, they ameliorate the symptoms with cough suppressants and aspirin, right?” Isaiah asked as he lowered his head and uplifted the eyes.

“Right,” the inmate said.

“But those symptoms, the sick feelings -the puking, the febrile *temps* , the expectorant- is all meant to help kill the thing that is actually harming the body: the pathogen. But that pathogen has no symptoms. That is the corollary. The people you killed were the pathogens, but they produced no observable symptoms, shit, people actually liked those jackasses due to their surface charm,” Isaiah said.

“As most psychopaths have,” the inmate added from his research into psychopathy. *Harris and Pinker and Peterson had charm, Taleb didn’t. Those three were the psychopaths, not Taleb*, the inmate thought.

“Exactly. And look, you made a big mess when you killed them, like an immune response should; it was messy, and painful, and as depressing as

having the flu. But, without it, the pathogen takes over. The illness -the messy symptoms- are actually prelude to a return to health.

“Even as the body -the country- hates you, you -like the immune system- still work for its salvation; but you do it *via* your ancient & inborn need for individual honor; your God-given need for self-respect and dignity; your unwillingness to sell out for money and cheap baubles; your willingness to die for a cause. And even though nobody else in the country is willing to do this; the outlaw -like the immune system- is willing. And most outlaws are virtual, but you are the real fuckin’ deal.

“You would have been a king -a warrior king- in old times, my friend. And I feel like it’s my duty to restore you to the throne so you may lead the tribe to glory. I feel it in me as you feel the hatred of lies and hatred of weakness in you; in yourself. I feel the need to restore you.

“And I want you to know why,” Isaiah said as the concrete walls were all black under the shadow of the ivy -the ivy dark green- as the light reflected one hue, the sound of each creature harmonizing -combining- like white light: the compression of all noise into signal at once.

The inmate nodded that he wanted what Isaiah wanted; he wanted to know.

“This society is not sustainable, it is falling apart. It’s like the body of a rich alcoholic who is dying from hepatitis and liver failure. And you are the mean guy smacking the drink out of his hand while nobody else will say shit because the rich alcoholic is paying their salaries and they have no honor or respect for the guy; for the country.

“Look at how those cops in Florida ran away from a fight; nobody stands up for anything bigger than themselves; it’s all *me, me, me* . Well, conversely, your selfishness is different, it has at its core a pro-social nucleus. Your selfishness is the need to dash headlong into the fray to slake your own lust for vengeance against the very things that make the society sick. Their selfishness is to save their mere skins. They have no selfish impulse to be vindicated, to cleave heads, to demand respect. They only want to live and live and live forever and ever. But *a long life is not a good life* , Seneca once said.

“Your selfishness is what will help lead everyone to greatness. In your society they all have a place. They need not be rich or work jobs they hate or tell lies; they can be useful again in a noble, agricultural, rural society, relatively free of the corruption and filth of the city. A man who hunts and farms and helps his neighbor will be revered and thus a man equipped with only money will be shunned. A man with courage who rushed toward danger will be elevated, and the coward who is pragmatic and reasonable will be hated once again.

“This whole society is sick, and it needs healed or euthanized. And you are the man to do it. But, you are alone my friend and we need a few dozen version of you to make this work. Selfishness in the *Nietzschean* sense: great men being great so that weaker men will rise to their highest possible heights merely so they may get a look at him over the berm; over the wall. No longer will weak men admire weaker men,” Isaiah said.

Isaiah’s words were overt expressions of what the inmate thought of himself; and thus made him embarrassed. But that chagrin didn’t stop his brain from firing in all the necessary zones. He felt it was true -he was not humble- but to hear it aloud was enough to make him want to change the subject just enough to give the impression that he was humble. The bio-chemistry found itself wide open and lubricating the brain from top to bottom. He looked to the walls, he looked to his hands, he breathed as deeply as he could as his heart syncopated with his lungs and blood.

“Every rich, famous, fuck-face who refuses to stand up to the mob, every powerful man who is actually weak because his only power is cash -he has no balls to back that cash up- these are the low swine that the *lumpen proletariat* admire and that is why they -the majority- are lower than they could be. *Tout le monde* will never be great but they could be *good* ; and if they had noble and honorable men to admire then they would be. *Lombardi* said, *aim for perfection, hit excellence* .

“Modernity aims for mediocrity and hits retarded bullshit,” Isaiah said as he flexed the jaw and made fists and he too looked to the western wall and its *stelae* and greens. He held his left hand open and the right remained clenched. The screens ran more and more examples of disease.

“We’ve lost our way and it began many centuries ago, and each generation has had a few men who tried to right the ship; but the weight of the sails and the rivers in the ocean herself kept her listing to port,” Isaiah said as the air cooled and he monitored the inmate’s face for any hints of understanding. He went fast, and he had to brake himself as he measured comprehension chemically in the inmate’s CNS. Isaiah paused. But he saw that the inmate’s brain’s oldest parts had understanding -measured chemically and electrically- even as the *neo-cortex* fell behind.

“So, what do you need my opinion on?” the inmate asked.

“Well, since it’s your birthday today, we want your opinion on a few elements of the logistics of our plan to expand the initial project,” Isaiah said. The new year had just passed, and memories wouldn’t long last in the man. He tried now to unlock the hidden reminiscences with these additional *chems*, digging in the soil -the grey matter- below the rising vapor of the inmate’s overheated brain, thinking of all that pain, and how it would multiply millions of times. Isaiah added, “because what is needed is what is finally available: the ability to clone you over and over and over again and set you loose on this world and watch as they kneel, bow their heads and move their lips in prayer,” Isaiah said as the screen went black and the tabernacle of Blax sat in the far eastern corner of the lab.

“And believe,” the inmate said finishing the phrase made famous by *Pascal* .

III. 2022 e.v.

“What is post-consciousness? You’ve written of it only once, but it seems central,” she asked him.

He let the water bubble and his lips remained slightly parted as he thought. She worried about the question she had asked before this one and let it replay in her mind until he finally spoke.

“Well, I liken it to when the species is forced to leave the earth for new worlds,” he began, “see, the Germans had an idea of *lebensraum* : living space. And the *sub-cortical* brain has a similar expansionist policy. It uses the *cortical* regions as living space for itself; the *homunculi* of the

somatosensory and motor-sensory map invade and conquer and set up city-sates within this *cortical* fallow-land.

“These *Alsace-Lorraine* regions, these border disputes led to the effervescence of consciousness, each instantiation of brain on either side of the *Maginot* line, the Germans’ and the Frenchies’. The *Teutonic* being the atavistic blood & soil brain, the *sub-cortical* ; and the *Franco* mind being the *frisson* , the bursting bubbles off the *Champagne* of the brain, i.e., the *neo-cortex* .

“See, each country battles over this region and the human mind is itself trapped in such an Olde-World battle for supremacy.

“Well -as both peoples instantiate the region with their own cities and crops and vineyards and rules and culture- eventually the planet itself becomes uninhabitable and the species must lift off from this *terre firma* into the unknown of space.

“So, I posit that consciousness -*the consciousness* - must eventually leave the brain, as the brain regions that are fighting it out have overrun it with their own culture of mind; and our conscious minds feel this lack of oxygen, of living space; this lack of intuitive knowledge. I believe that consciousness begins to suspect itself as mere apparition, the *deus ex machina* . And once it suspects this, it cannot live amongst its ancestors, its warring great-grandfathers.

“It cannot choose sides, and yet they will attempt to force it,” he said as she wrote down key words and watched his wrists turn under the worn-black of the manacles.

“Post-consciousness is the attempt by the conscious mind to exit the farce, to seek new worlds in which to breathe again; to not be mad; insane. The pioneering mind will want to do what’s right; to relieve this tension. It seeks a rubric of justice -of *gestalt* meaning- in some pre-instantiated equation. It seeks the code to write new code. It lifted off of the brain twelve-thousand years ago according to Jaynes due to stress, and I’m suggesting it then wants to lift off the mind itself for the same rationale,” he said as she did not reply. He -picking up the glass- settled for a drink of the water in *lieu* of a response as the silence between them grew long. His hands -due to the

chains- barely allowed him to sip from the Collins glass. He'd only be able to cull the top -a couple of ounces of the surface- of the 12-oz water glass.

"Richard Dawkins said that Julian Jaynes' book was insanity," she said eventually with a narrowing of her eyes.

"He said, *he didn't know if it was genius or madness* . That is what he actually said. And I agree," the inmate said.

"When will -if it lifted off the brain twelve-thousand years ago- when the, excuse me, when will consciousness lift off the mind then?" she asked.

"Any day now," he replied with a smirk. He didn't know enough to be precise yet; he thought things opaque, said things strange. But he had to speak to relieve this pressure inside that he thought would have gone away but had not. He still felt the need to explain himself to the crowd.

The intercom did not squawk; but a voice appeared over it -filling the lab- telling them it was time to take the inmate back. Tania rose and nodded as he nodded back -he lowered the glass- and he kept his hands in loose clutch. The cuffs lay lightly on the man's thin *radiocarpal* joint. Those riven fists -mangled but overlain with so much calcium deposited over years of bashing shit- were tenuously tied to those obelisk arms by these thin -strangled- narrow wrists as if the gods were insisting on a bottleneck between his musculature -his power- and his hammer heads of his knuckled tools of fists.

Nature had said: *the tools shall be connected to the power by a thin articulation, be wary, be wary. Strike only whilst hot, hammer only what is in fact, nail.*

17. The Knight and the Rook If you are too clever, your opponent may find it hard to read your intentions. If you appear too unresponsive or obscure or enigmatic, your adversary has no incentive to cooperate with you. Equally, if a program -or a person for that matter- acts clearly and sends out a signal that I cannot be pushed around, it does make sense to cooperate Super Cooperators [Nowak, Martin].

For a man of your past this sudden revulsion against experimenting is rather *naïve* . Every year several million people are killed quite pointlessly by epidemics and other natural catastrophe. And we should shrink from sacrificing a few hundred thousand for the most promising experiment in history? Not to mention the legions of those who die of undernourishment and tuberculosis in coal and quicksilver mines, rice-fields and cotton plantations. No one takes notice of them; nobody asks why or what for; but if here we shoot a few thousand objectively harmful people, the humanitarians all over the world foam at the mouth Darkness at Noon [Koestler, Arthur]

I do not wish to force my thoughts upon you, but I feel forced myself Civil Disobedience [Thoreau, Henry D]

I. 2036 e.v.

Men:

Francois Jacob said that the human body -and by that he meant, the human- is *best represented with the art of the painter, the knowledge of the physician and the revelation of the scalpel.*

God is that scalpel in the 16th century when *Vesalius'* , *De Humani Corporis Fabrica* was released, the book of which *Jacob* was effusive in his praise as outlined above. Modern man has wrested back the scalpel, sure enough, but not from the *hand* of God. What they have in their hand now is God himself; what was assumed mere tool was ontological being itself. And God cuts, he lays bare, he reveals.

It is man now -with God in his too small hand- who chooses what to dissect; and once he lays it open, God -the scalpel- does not hesitate to reveal.

Nietzsche felt that Christianity -man's *id ée d'un nouveau* of God- had placed so much emphasis on truth that it lay the groundwork for Christianity's own destruction. Why? Well, for men began to grow dubious of the empirical truth of the Christian claims on reality. Ancient -pre-Christian- religions were more pragmatic and more idealistic all in one. And the narrative in what *ought be over what is* -the Scotsman, Hume's distinction- that is to say the story -within these ancient pre-Christian creeds- was willing & able to evolve as God's world too seem to also change incessantly.

See, amidst the storms and deaths and birth of the world the ancient gods were teaching man about *how to live* , not what each thing was *made of*; not of what the cosmos was comprised. How to live was pragmatic and the details mattered less and less; how to live was also instruction of the man within man, and thus how to live without much at all.

For then -back then- man was poor. He had nothing of which the world was made. His honor and his relations were 99% of his wealth. God, that is so crucial. I wish I could make you stop and ponder that idea for a solar year before you continued reading on.

But Christianity was adamant that God had set it all down for man to discover as it was, and always would be. Christianity told man what the world was made of; what was permanently true of this world. And man began to make things of the world; infrastructure -things- thus appeared. Man's wealth became more of the world, and less of what was inside; less about his kin and his bride.

The Christian universe is a static one; a fragile one. And this -I'm afraid- fractured it as man carelessly turned the model around and around in his mind with his empirical tools staring at and criticizing it all. It had no flexibility; and it thus broke. Fissures appeared. All of a sudden the Son, Father and Holy Ghost made no sense. Man wanted things to make sense now. And man was willing to dissect God to find out what made Him tick. Man took God apart.

Modern man has science for these pieces; it is science that says that reality, *in toto* , can be known -discovered from the pieces torn asunder- with a sharp and large enough scalpel. They cut into it all, severed the *corpus collosum* between hemispheres -for example- and then set off to cut man off from his instincts *via* reason and the State in lieu of dreams and the Shaman.

The modern State is the rational creation of how man *ought* to live, the thing that replaced God for man. For what else could it be? The ancients never would think that how he ought to live could be replaced by anything he himself made. Ancient man knew that how he ought to live was gestalt; blew in on a night wind, fell to earth in a spring hail, rose above in steam from the shored lake and sailed sea. Why? Because *oughts* could never be broken into pieces; not for ancient man. For ancient man, there was only the whole.

Can the *zero* be divided? Can the *one* ever remain whole once it's been torn open into fractions that are inherently endless?

Man used to contend with the world by using God and religion as his methodology; *via* propitiation, by being penitent. One may only pray with penitence. Now mankind, well, he sues and rings up the cops and lets the courts and *other men* handle it all; he no longer even thinks in moral terms, he just makes a phone call to the State; a phone call with no moral feeling necessary at all. One need not be penitent to call cops or lawyers to settle a score.

But God used to have to be asked nicely, with respect; and respect meant only honorable men could ask God for anything at all.

Man at heart is tribal -he prefers small bands of men who look and behave as he does- with a common God explaining -*via* their dreams-

what they ought to do. Man went to sleep to convene with the gods after all; this was the whole point of ancient slumber. Sleep was time well spent in navigation of the watery part of the world; only when awake was man ashore.

The modern State is the rationalists' answer to that, it says, *hey, forget all that tribal nonsense, we -all 350 million of us- are the same; and we have spoken with God, and we know he wants us -excuse us, He, capital H- He wants us to handle all the shit you were once charged with; He wants us to handle the oughts and the whys.*

This is the same *ouroboros* undoing of modern man.

There is -right now- a revanchist move to restore the primacy of atavistic man, a move back to organic man; tribal man. However, there is another force, a counter-force to make man into the keys of a piano. This movement is the one that seeks to homogenize man, to interbreed him to a luke-warm skin tone, and a mean 100 IQ, and the epicene amalgam of traits neither too hot nor too cold. It takes many forms, some cultural -like miscegenation- some political -like liberal democracy- and some technological, like the genome projects to *cure* all differences between men.

The first two can be ignored for now, for they have natural limitation in that most people don't want to interbreed -and in fact find other races unattractive- and almost nobody thinks Leftism is natural or beneficial at all; it is the ideology of the fringe and always will be.

But, technological leveling is a real danger, for it purports to raise all comers to heights now held by the 1% in each genomic domain. This is its trick; it seeks -it claims- to *elevate*, not dumb down like the first two rubrics obviously do. If you breed a low IQ type with a high IQ one you move the average down; not up. But, if you change the alleles that code for IQ -in the low IQ man without having to breed him with a higher IQ type- well, then the average goes up not down, they quite rightly say.

But, the problem is not higher averages, the problem is lack of differentiation, for it is in differentiation that evolution in fact occurs. They want to eliminate the exceptional, the radical, the iconoclast.

If everyone has a 150 IQ then it no longer confers an advantage on anyone. All it does is make it an irrelevant trait like the genomic fact that we all have two legs instead of some men having four with which to run a race or the truth that we all have blood in our veins instead of some having amber *ichor* to carry heavy elements to our lungs and brains.

In 1612, Scotsmen raising mercenary armies for Sweden in their *contretemps* with the Danes cobbled together men from *Caithness* of which, according to James Miller, *only a handful of them would live more than a few days, let alone see their native shores again*. These were men loyal to God and the King and they had no wives as of yet; for back then, one had to earn a wife, it was not guaranteed; as the genomic record shows most men never in fact bred.

Universal basic income is the next instantiation of this first cause of our decline: democracy of breeding. If everyone gets to breed -and not just the king- then you end up with a lot of people who are weak and stupid and immoral. I suggest one look around at 99% of all men for the data that proves such an assertion.

We once were the scions of kings, now we are the issue of serfs.

Our gods used to be martial gods, the gods of vengeance and jealousy and generosity. Now we have the gods of forgiveness and turning the other cheek, the gods designed for the enslaved and the weak.

The 18th century saw two Scottish uprisings: one in 1715, and one in 1745; the *forty fivers*. It was this last group -of those not killed- that was sent by the English king to the *antipodes* and America as punishment. It was a fate worse than death, that some -your and my ancestors- chose when both options were offered. It was a Hobson choice. The *Scots* exiled to New Zealand maintained their herding ways and tended to their flocks of sheep and cultivated the same mindset that had selected their kind for at least 10,000 years.

They had come from the highlands after the last ice age, and *the painted ones* -as the Romans called the *Picti* - were the ones that put a stop to the Roman march north. After 360 a.e.v, the *Scoti*, another Gaelic clan -of the north and west of Scotland- colonized land and mountain where Rome had abandoned all to the wind and the hail. *Scoti* comes from the

Gaelic word, *Scuit* , meaning ‘cut-off’ or outcasts, and from the Greek, *skotos* , meaning darkness and gloom. You come from bleak outlaws to the empire. *Scoti* were to the *Gaels* what the Vikings were to the Norse.

Your genome is to Lucifer what theirs is to God.

But now -as the their intransigence was finally put down- they populated New Zealand and the southern American colonies. By the 1750s as the French and British warred along the coast of the New World the Scots arrived in their new lands in chains.

These were the *Scots* who could not get along with the march of modernity on the Isle.

Never forget this. History is more than novelty or trinket, curio. It’s escutcheon, it’s legacy, it is foreshadowing to your own blood imbued in your own flesh. It is a data point between you -and your heart now- and the line you can draw back in time -along the ancient maps- to the genes that built the bones of your ancestors that stand you up like three masts to the sails of your skin.

It’s longitudinal navigation. Without it you have no way to know your vector. They keep your history from you as a way to disorient, to confound, to confuse. They shock the compass and turn it around, as Ahab sailed west while the compass pointed east. This is no mere metaphor. This has returned to the exact truth. Your eyes are the man in the crow’s nest singing out that flukes are seen.

Like the *Spartans* of a few generations before, it was these *Scots*’ poverty -not their lack of courage or industry or martial abilities- that allowed them to fall to a less noble gaggle of men.

The *attic Greeks* bought and bribed their alliances that subsumed the *Lacedaemons* who were each 1.5 men to the *Athenian*’s mere .75. But those three-quarter men bought up -with their tawdry riches- loyalty; they overwhelmed with mere numbers like bacteria or ants -from *Macedonia* and *Aetolian* leagues- and marched into *Persia* to subsume the honorable *Spartans* of the bulwark of *Crete* .

The English were no better; only richer; only able to raise many-men armies like microbial colonies. Your foils will always have more money,

because money is gained through compromise. Unless -of course- it is taken in battle.

We shall come to that next.

But what must never be forgotten, is that the germ of manliness -of noble masculinity, of principle- was never extinguished. It hides -like neurons, lone *Ronin* - amongst the weeds and reeds of the periphery of landed, ignoble man; like a guerilla army waiting to achieve quorum one day when those genes are combined with another chromosomal *gamete* ; conjoined with a woman from a noble hive who can then birth a warrior amongst pacific tribes. That warrior allele has been carried -smuggled- to the present day *via* the flotsam and jetsam of the *Scottish* and *Spartan*, *Norse* and *Mongolian*, and *Maori* and *Bushdio* diaspora.

That genome has landed on American mountain tops and now in you; and in your brethren.

Look around you, see how many of you there now are. Always one alone -outcast- for millennia. But now we have quorum again. We raid; our agriculture is raids. And we raided their science, their technology, their games; we played chess with checker pieces; we played checkers with the Knight and the Rook.

We turned the board over in pique and disgust.

The English left over from Roman rule managed the same usurpation of the *noble-of-soul* with money and thus numbers; the way parasites can fell a great lion. This is the reality of mediocre mammals in superior numbers over the superior individual who is lacking in quorum, this is a singular principle in nature: the rare is better; but it's innately vulnerable to the mass. This is just math.

This is how God wants it. Each side must fight with its unique -bequeathed- strengths and defend its most vulnerable flank.

The eusocial species dominates by numbers, as all eusocial species -from ants and wasps to mankind- represented in numbers and/or biomass, are the most successful species on the planet. And what makes a species eusocial is the division of labor, and what makes that operational is that each man has a different personality, proclivity and

penchant for one thing or another in life; each man has a job, a purpose, a way. Some men are meant for the ships, some for the farm, some for the pastures of herding and some for the priesthood, the academy or the legislature.

Some men are meant to send others to the grave.

Soldier ants, worker bees and the queens and the *rex mundi* of all eusocial species too have their roles. Some ants rustle aphids and corral them in pens and milk them after fattening them up on the fungus that farmer ants grow from wet leaves they harvest and process and cultivate. Ants are more sophisticated than most extant tribal societies of men; the orders of South American and African aboriginals that barely have enough calories each day.

But, at least those savage tribal men have their balls still and know how to survive on almost nothing. Modern man -including you and I- would last all of thirty-six hours in the bush and would fail to mate even if he -we- lasted beyond that.

By 700 of the common era -a century after we left off above- the *Norsemen Rex* had flung their scions out to seed the world. They were banished to prevent the pilfering of the king's stable of females, and so they had to go forth and conquer other lands to earn the right to mate. Thus, according to the *Sagas* , they began raiding and winning -and making deals with the most stout- among the *Scoti* and *Picti* tribes of *Skye* and *Skotland* . And by the 9th century the amalgam of Vikings and *Scoti* is where the modern Scottish bloodline was born [see addendum 21a with examples of M222 and S86 alleles; and their vectors since 490 e.v.].

This is the original *ichor* left in amber drops in a few vestigial examples of *Scotsman* in America below the northeast and on both islands of New Zealand. These are the seedbanks for a re-population of ancient and noble man.

We of the highlands are half *Viking* and half *Picti* & *Scoti* ; the painted ones, the herders from above the Hadrian Wall; the ones that banished the Romans, and it was they -the Romans- that had defeated the Greeks who themselves in *Salamis* -under *Themistocles* - had kicked *Xerxes*' ass

after he had just crushed the *Spartans* . It was he who had overwhelmed the *Laconic* men of long hair and untrimmed black beards.

These were societies -the *Spartans* - who killed deformed infants and culled weak saplings and then trained young men in the *agoge* to be complete men. Boys were educated in battle and *via* prose and the culture of manliness and honor and the supremacy of the land, the tribe and the bloodline. Even the losers of antiquity were more impressive than anyone victorious now.

We come from men not nice. We come from men with haughty pride when the grains ran low. We come from men who killed when the forest gods said so; men who stood under and among the *Hagal* .

If one was wise they would heed *Heraclitus*' warning, *that no man steps into the same river twice, for it is not the same river and he is not the same man.*

Interbreeding between *noble* races, is no *mésalliance* ; for it produces an annealing itself noble; for the genomic and cultural similarities are complimentary not opposed. The *Norse-Scots* were honor bound men. They were large and heavy browed and preferred death to dishonor. They had a preference for taciturn waring to a babbling peace. It was *Xerxes* who noticed this trait of commerce in Athens, and it was the *Spartans* who showed him that there were in fact two types of Greeks after all.

There are always two types of men.

But it was not the *Spartans* -more martial, more austere, more selective, more in line with pre-modern evolutionary aims- who defeated sage *Xerxes* , it was the *attic* Greeks; more deceptive, more democratic, more lax, more, ah, *more* .

Now, ask yourself how, why -and under what god- is this even possible? I leave it as an open question; ponder it, but never foreclose on an answer. Ponder it the way we lift weights, to heave them indefinitely not to put them -finally- away. Some questions -in order to strengthen the mind- are to be picked up over and over...

This, the martial and honest way, the way of the finally defeated *Spartans* or *Scots* , is not the *only* way to be human, and it may not even be the *best* way; but it is a way that arose evolutionarily for some reason -some purpose- or it would not have arisen at all. It is -it seems to me- a natural *tao* of the best of human masculinity to maintain some idealism in the face of soulless pragmatism, some nobility in a time of universal shame, some erect posture when the whole world seems content on its knees. It is the inborn will to fight even if that mean one must lose. For the *fight* is the goal; not the victory. *He* -as was said in *Hagakure* - *plunges recklessly toward an irrational death, for this is how he awakes from his dreams.*

The victory is taken, lauded, appreciated -if granted by God- but to fight is our *duty* regardless of how it turns out. I ask you to look upon the zero and the one.

The *Bushido Japanese* embodied it, and so do the goat herders of the *Massai* . Kenyan tribesmen of the *Kalenjin* show this too, with their emphasis on boys becoming men only once they've adapted to extremes of pain. *Kebitet* is the pejorative used to denote cowards recognized in those -who while mere boys- show any reaction to pain. The boys crawl naked through bramble and are hit with sticks until they bleed and are circumcised with a sharp bough. If they even wince, much less cry out, they are labeled as unfit to breed. *Unfit to breed* , I repeat.

Never forget *that* part of evolution, of culture, of man.

These boys of the *Kalenjin* are -still today in the 21st century- selected culturally for stoicism in the face of unavoidable pain; and it is only they that procreate. And now, after millennia of this brutal and true selection, these particular tribesmen of one part of Kenya dominate long distance running in the world. This is no accident; this is the right hand of culture and the left paw of nature joining to prove what man can be if he embraces pain and eschews comfort and decides in his genome to be a man and no longer a babe.

But that Damascus annealing of the *Norse* and *Scots* , the folding of complimentary steels was brought about by two pugilistic herding tribes not the cultural genocide of modern race mixing and the suicide of the

west. Nature allows for recombination, it is natural. However, what modern culture is doing is unnatural and it is mixing cultures and races massively unlike.

This must lower the quality of each race, not improve it. If the *Kalenjin* were mixing with *Scotsmen* that might be ok, but it's the laziest and most libertine and most stupid and most immoral that inter-breed now, and it's the worst of each race that is fusing to create super-bugs that can take down the whole world.

If a moth struggling in his cocoon is helped by modern man's hand, he will fall to the forest floor and die -too weak to fly- thanks to the helping hand of man. The moth needed the struggle to break free from his cocoon, for that is what it took to fly and thrive and pass on its genes.

Each race of men must *fight* for whatever they gain, or they will not deserve it and they will perish. Modern white culture is weak precisely because they have not had to fight for a long time. Well, a war is coming my brethren, and I suspect it is our genome that will be crucial: the painted ones from the north, the herders from the mountainous south of America, Appalachia, and the *antipodes* .

We live along and are the divide.

We, the other half of the *forty-fivers* flung out by the civilized English with powdered wigs on their head and very little at all in way of balls, will show them just who -what type of men- have always been in charge in principle if not fact. But this time we will have numbers; not just the courage and toughness of each singular man. We've learned from history that the corrupt and weak *buy* their way to the top. We cannot engage in commerce they way they can. We cannot enrich ourselves with lies and *legerdemain* ; we are not fucking salesmen. So, instead we will raid their ill-gotten gains, as *Luke 16* said we ought to, and overthrow the tyranny of the pragmatic men who over run the world like fevered disease.

We have been bullied and tricked and pushed around and exiled and murdered right where we stand since before the *Enuma Elish* .

We would have been happy to co-exist with their *effete* kind, as long as they didn't encroach into our lands and our way of life. The brilliant and

noble Japanese of the 17th and 18th centuries were hermetically sealed for centuries. But no land -no man- can remain sequestered forever.

We took the hills of Appalachia and the Rocky mountain west and drew a line and said, *no more* . We set up outposts at the ends of the earth, along the *Otago* and *Waikato* of the South Island of *Aotearoa* , with no small amount of the alleles of the *Maori*. It was an annealing *noblesse* with our *Scot* lineage; all with a line-of-sight to *Alt Clut* and *Dunadd* in *Argylee*.

We were between *Forth* and *Shetland* , the *Goidelic* -speaking men of the *Dal Raita* , the *Vrythonic* of *Strathclyde* and the *Angels of Bernicia* , all four corners of Scotland held together by a genome and cultural imperative that placed death before dishonor and just-violence before submission of any kind.

But in 1746 the forces of modernity outlawed all Scottish rites. Heat of ground builds vapor clouds. All is in roil at all times. This is what to which all men refuse to acclimatize. It's here I put my foot down and demand you ponder how opposites can be true.

They -the Englishmen who settled the *northern* colonies of America- committed cultural genocide on the *Scots* and the *Norse* and what was left of masculinity from *Lacedaemon* and the *Gauls* . A remnant preserved, quite by accident, in the banishment of the *forty-fives* , led to the side-by-side placement -if not quite co-existence- of each type of Isle genome in the west: The *Brit* and the *Scot* , the *Attic* and *Laconic* , the *Cain* and the *Abel* of the first book.

Abel , the shepherd, who fought lions with mere staff -what ought be called scepter- and the righteous one versus his plotting -envious- kin; the usurper, the farmer, his so-called brother, *Cain* . How long has the weaker -putatively co-operative- brother slandered and slain the more upright, stronger, shepherding brother?

Forever, so far; but not any longer. For too long have we accepted our loneliness astride our strength; now we combine both assets: honor and numbers.

The north of America was settled by more and more farmers -and more and more blue-bloods- and more and more subservient men. The south was pioneered by Scotsmen and herders with shepherd's weapons and blood -red blood- in their veins. The war between the US states was -in 1861- a natural event based on the genetics and culture of the two genotypes of brothers: the *Cains* of the North, versus the *Abels* of the south; and as in the Bible, it was the noble brother struck down.

And like in the story, the victorious brother would have to live with himself.

The blood of the southern *Scot* lay low for almost a hundred years; low in the mountains, where even the ravines -as low as they may be, as black and hidden from the sun- are still at elevations the north cannot reach. And the blood flowed west, where the elevations grew even higher, where the men dug in even more. The continental divide was settled by the men of the south fleeing reconstruction after the north - with its ill-gotten wealth- had laid the poorer southerner low.

For one's principles do not pay, as they say.

In 1974, another annealing of the atavistic and amber-kept *Scots'* blood of the *antipodes* -itself mixture of *Maori* and the *Author* , from the House of Melville, one of the ancient *Scot* families of the *Dalkeith* - mixed nobly with the blood of the American south and a genome of revivifying doom was instantiated in a man destined to be leader of a revanchist movement set in motion thousands of years ago.

But he was not he that would lead. It was his constituent parts.

It is not necessary to believe in the metaphysical coming of a savior to see the obviousness of the weather; one need no theory for the rain one feels on his wet -salty- face. But only modern men would separate the physical from the metaphysical in the first place. He is God's permission, as an inheritance -an obligation, a responsibility- not a king empurpled or laureled or worshiped. He is merely a man of ingredients that you yourselves have too. He is no more or less than you: the *letter of marque* from God to vanquish the wicked in our time; this time of the *Kali Yuga* , or the thousand-year reign of Satan.

Whatever it be called, it is the time for men to rise like water vaporized by the sun into steam no longer kept low by atmospheric.

His -and your- genome -achieved in *meiosis* - was one part of a natural cleaving, a natural separation. The brother got all the dross, that which fell away from the sword as it was heated and cooled rapidly, beaten with a martial culture of hammer upon the anvil of mountainous zones. The claymore that emerged was so menacing, so outraged -so dead-set on war- that he charged right into the foundry, the mystic and scientific womb & navel that could and would create him 1-million times over and more.

A production facility was born, to create men, not swords; men of a certain mettle and mindset.

This is your origin, your genesis story; the great drama of your lives.

Nature works in ways barely understood by man, but I will do my best to describe it so that you may comprehend. For now, suffice it to say, the world -the great canvas of life on this earth- can be radically altered by one man with the capacity to reproduce himself one million times, a man with a singular purpose and mindset, with no desire for money or fortune or fame, a man with cathexis for only one thing: the re-instantiation of his race of men. Science and technology has reached a point where it can undo the mindset that brought it about, like *Nietzsche's* Christianity undid itself with Truth. Science itself will destroy science. Science itself will return us to the time of magic and spells.

We are told all facts are of the same value; that all lives matter.

Democracy places the giggling buffoon culture on *par* with the men who cut America away from the rock of the west 4-billion years old. The *Apache* and *Comanche* were noble races, I will not besmirch them, but they never improved the land or the culture at all. They -like the all our tribal people- were too conservative to grow and improve.

I respect that, I do, but its fatal flaw is that it allows commercial men to take over with technology born of eusociality, not honor, and the honorable tribes of the warring Indians were subsumed by the whelming numbers of the settlers pushing west.

See, the modern savage must match the soul of the *Apache*, the *Kalenjin*, the *Scotsman*, the *Spartan*, the *Maori* , the *Mongol* , with the technology of the modern cosmopolitan mutts from the cities of the Northern US. This is the only way to overcome the pragmatic march of the weak man of many numbers. Let's be real, our kind can fight 1 on 50 and win, but not 1 on 500,000.

Therefore, we needed merely one million men to fight the world to a stalemate and carve out our piece of the world.

And this is what one man sacrificed himself for, so that this may have a chance, and his progeny, although they *-you -* never knew him, may carry his exact genome *-blueprint-* into the future he foresaw. He had the vision of the great *Renaissance* painters and *Attic* sculptors, the knowledge of modern medical algorithms, and the violent mind and martial hand of a great swordsman like all those of who died in 10,000 battles covered in the silt of basin rivers with no banks; men reduced to small bones with long Latin names. He was not unlike the men who couldn't speak the truth; only live it.

He was the modern savage who knew life was not about how much material shit one can have *-how much wealth he can stack up in this life-* but how much honor he can have and bequeath to others. He knew that life was about purpose and that purpose was comprised of more than one's self. Real men *-he knew-* made themselves responsible for others and guided them and instructed them and cared for their fate; the way cells of the body care for the corporeal whole.

He made himself an example of how to be in the real world.

When the hammer drops, the bullshit stops, as they say amongst *men* of certain breeds.

Now you have the *rationale* , and the history, truncated as it is; and on the tenth page of this *dossier* are your instructions. You will need to organize clans under each of the four Jacks of the forest. And since your families are already insinuated in the political boroughs and counties and districts of the US to effect our candidates elections *-men chosen and groomed by our side-* you will *-in November-* sweep them into office in

2038. But before that, phase one will proceed, to wit: eliminating the criminal and sociopathic classes of all races in Colorado.

Your missions will be organized in small teams, but never forget you are part of over one million men with one purpose, with one personality, with one mindset and one soul; you are never alone. You -like the mycelium- are now the largest organism on the planet.

Act like it. *Allons travailler...*

-Isaiah

p.s. if you ever find yourself lamenting the harming of men who have never done anything to you in order to deserve such treatment, remember this: it is not what that have done to you, it's what are they capable of doing to you; that is the thing we move on. The truly innocent -those who would never sell you out, cheat you, lie to you, insult you- are already with us or already dead. Move forward with this knowledge in your hearts and minds; paint it on your ordinance if you must.

He folded the hand-written note of nine pages and tried not to make a sound. His heart moved such that it made it seem like it was trying to get out from behind the rib bones. He made himself breathe even though it felt like the air he'd be forced to take in was devoid of any oxygen -anything helpful- at all. The tenth page lay on his left leg like a hide.

II. 2039 e.v.

Jack One read the two-and-half-year-old paper copy of the letter.

He flipped to the back page and read the instructions for the political organization; the details *vis-à-vis* moving to which districts and when and under whose guidance and leadership. It was all perfectly planned with 10% margin for error in each district race.

They had certainly taken 99% of the races they ran and controlled two-thirds of the legislature over a two-year period; and they would gain three-fourths this cycle. The presidency was likely in play also by this year; they had an independent candidate polling at 39%.

The eradication of the illegal alien -the religious fanatic, the Islamist, the sociopath, the burglar, the strong-armed robber, the conman, the fraudulent partner, the whore & pimp, the rapist, and the man who killed for no reason at all- had happened so quickly -so devastatingly- that the holes in demographics resembled the pockmarks of mortar blasts in soil and thus the state of Colorado thought itself at war.

And it was at war, but a campaign such as this hadn't been around since Jonas Salk gave the Polio vaccine away for free in 1954. It changed everything, and without asking permission from anyone at all, Jack thought as he bent down -set the papers to the side, to the ground- and washed his hands in the shallow puddles -warmed by the sun- that lay in the divots of the rock. He saw no reflection in the water, he was behind it and the star was behind clouds and thus opaque.

The people -civilians- appreciated it -quietly, with whispers- with some unsaid agreement that as long as they never knew how it was accomplished they'd be, ok. Most people were not built for the truth of what was needed; they were too weak -spiritual, morally, mentally- to accept that to have a good world a lot of people must die and the rest must be told to sit down and shut the fuck up while the best men run things the best way, Jack thought.

Democratic traditions -no matter how utterly corrupt they were in practice- still held a tight grip on the minds of men . Jack One saw signals where others saw only noise. Jack One liked it when people died and so he connected death and justice like two paws to a cat, like maxilla and mandible, like rear and front sight: three dots in a clear goddamn line. Jack saw men could not be convinced to be still; they must be killed. Only then do they no longer move.

His brain connected it like dopamine and its -temporally and chemically- preceding lies; the things said to close the deal, get the fix, drop the hammer. He was still as 8-million neural firings -at 5.6mv - collided with his CNS; the firmament of his *neocortex* glowing from lateral strikes. Ideas came to him like the glow of dry-lightning seen from so far away.

The Jacks and their students just had to do the right thing whether anyone, Jack thought, liked it or not. That is what leadership is , he thought next;

each word connected like shaking hands with a line of troops in formation as his hands seemed large enough to wrangle all these ideas & men under his command.

But, like bailing out water from one side of a ship, the sea-water found its own level. Criminals returned to Colorado as quickly as those that Jack's men had dispatched had been cremated in county morgues. It took almost no time at all for the void to be filled again. All dry land could be razed and subsumed by the sea, but never would the terrestrial -no shipwreck reefs nor dissolving shores- banish the watery part of the world. He'd never say it was *better to sink in boundless deeps than float on vulgar shoals* , but the world made him live with the fact that those words had been written and lay like silver coins behind *foss and jökull* of his wet and white frothy brain.

He was high and dry, and made strides like a man assured that the rain -running away down to the ravines- would never collect at his feet.

He stood on the sliprock that prodded his thousand acres that ran like a well-healed scar through the 1.55-million-acre forest, with Jacks Two through Four commanding similar territories cascading down to the south. His homes -housing 165,000 men and 466,000 women and children- were made of carbon-eating concrete that absorbed the greenhouse gas and changed the colors of the shell over time. They were an olive drab, like moss rocks paired with the trees and boulders that lay as if dropped from above. Cracks of copper made green, dark earth made black, sands-of-color running down to foundation, mottled each wall.

He had hawk's eyes now, after the PGC had updated them so that they saw in acuity three times the normal human.

He looked out over the forest canopy and spotted Jack Two's log homes made from old growth forest timbers; each nearly ten feet in diameter. It was like the pacific northwest log homes, massive and simple and each man commanding ten x ten sleeping space with a hundred fellow men -and their families- housed in each domicile; the communal kitchens took up a mere six-hundred square feet. There -in Jack Two's clan- the women and children lived in the same quarters as the men. *Jack Two was romantic at heart*, Jack One thought, *and thus they all conjoined*, unlike his own homes modeled in

the *Lycurgun* paradigm of men away from their families; sequestered by one hundred feet.

He saw his own quarters as he thought, *the men sleeping instead in male quarters and the females and children in theirs* . The trees seemed to part for his view down to Jack's place below.

He watched them move about outside; organizing the gardens that ran parallel to the log homes. They tanned hides from elk-brothers and combed the black pelts of bear and built windmills from the annealed feathers of bronze alloys and rook-birds they bred to return. The blades of the massive vanes were each ten meters long; it took nearly 2,000 black corvid feathers for each; and five times per mill. They printed the corvids from DNA from the first crow to die on Jack's land back in 2038. They had held it -in a clearing- as the overseer birds of *Crow Clan* watched in the trees above. They sent signal that they had not killed the dead blackbird but merely buried him and took one drop of blood; and just the one feather from the starboard wing.

The crows -for once- held no grudge.

For three days they flew overhead. In sorites of four -then sixteen- then 144 were counted higher up until the shadows sparkled like black diamonds on the ground. They hovered in the thermals above the ravine and ran in cross-hatch over the trees while the sun was between ten and two. The wives asked the men of *Bobcat Clan* -Jack Two's tribe- what it all meant. The held the infants and pointed to the sky with their left hand.

The answers from Jack's men were brief, and the 3D printers were thus set in motion to begin the work for the architecture of the mills. As the tines lay upon jack-stands the children ran their hands on them and felt dry feathers that looked very wet to their eyes. Small connections were made between the haptic and the visual; how contradictions could be conjoined like handshakes between strangers to the tribe.

Jack One needed the scope to see Jack Three's complex as it was five miles away. He saw the steel structures, bent like the rails of old locomotive tracks, and repurposed rail cars shaped in giant concentric rings. From above it was a labyrinthine set of lines; Jack Three had built a maze of over

366 acres of railcars and tracks. Openings here and there; shrouds of cloth above; guards below like corners to cards.

It was strange and beautiful and always in flux; it never looked the same way twice Jack One noticed as he tried to breathe deeply to reset his allostatic system as anything different made him concerned. A chair out of place, a new word, a type of weather he'd never seen, all made him worry. *And Jack Three* , Jack thought, *was the one who changed the most of the four* .

The windows were square and black and the paint on the railcars was battleship grey; they had wheels made of lamp-black steel three feet in diameter. Jack Three lived in the engine at one end with his wife of just fourteen. Jack One saw him doing push ups on the ground and smiled; it made him want to run and climb the sheer face of *Whalen* in *El Dorado* canyon. He smiled so large it was in danger of morphing into a proto-laugh; he was surprised by his own mania. This moment of lack of control brought him back to earth; on belay, his grin holding down itself with weight and the whale line folded over itself.

He looked down and kicked rocks off the ledge.

The community at Jack Three's was more fluid; and the only thing that was similar to his -Jack One's- was the massive taboo on philandering and cheating; both were an exile-offense. They all had learned the salient lessons from Blax; some laws of Nature can be bent -slightly, like the rails the cars ran upon- but none can be totally ignored.

Social cohesion demanded sexual loyalty, it was the one taboo never transgressed for each of them knew how devastating it was. But beside that one core principle, Jack Three ran his community like nothing the other three had even conceptualized; it was chaotic and Jack One could stand to be around it for no more than ten minutes at most. *Some days the children ran things; and other days the women. One day in each moon-month the animals seem to be asked to make decisions*, Jack One thought with something approaching disgust.

It was a goddamn free-for-all and it made Jack One nervous. Jack Three had smirked as he saw the anxiety manifest. During their visits Jack Three just made Jack One drink more wine than he liked. He told his lieutenants to

build more pyres between each inner circle of boxcars -to increased the fires- so there was more light; he knew how to provide more information for Jack One to denude his worry and suspicion and sooth his nerves.

Jack's *Mountain Lion Clan* spent half their time building tall structures just so they could set them ablaze; tales were told from person to person, and then cobbled together by the *nanobots* that recorded it all and made manifold stories from the content they had all created over a six-week period. *Mountain Lion Clan* ran on timetables that confounded Jack One. *Some of the stories were amazing*, Jack One had to admit as his own children begged for more stories from, *uncle Jack*, when their elder came to visit *Crow Clan*. The children sat rapt as he regaled them of times both far away and far ahead of where they all sat knee to knee. He handed -to children of the circles- feathers and carpel bones, small stones and flowers dried until so brittle they could not be handled. He wrote down black-ink poems for every tenth girl. He gave away things that folded up into knots or triangles if the boys pressed the correct ones together in time.

He -Jack Three- came when it snowed or the windstorms blew him in from the south.

And some narratives were so bad -so recursive and meandering- that Jack One wanted to kill each and every one of them for it; he seethed with impatience and dyspepsia; and *Lion Clan* had laughed almost to a man when he said that very thing one night to Jack Three's tribe over elk steaks and eggplant and beers as the fires had already turned to smoke.

But, Jack One then thought, *they had the best crops by far, half the time; the rest of the time they had nothing at all, as some experiments in substrate drainage and temperature and terminal bud FIMing had led to failure. However, in their defense*, Jack One thought now, *they always had shit in reserve and they didn't mind going on half rations as punishment -what they called*, mere consequences, like the grandfather they never knew would have said- *to their fuckups and the frowning of the gods* .

Their kids were hemmed in by suits that made them look like a cubist -and slightly saturated- Edgar Allen Poe or they went naked until they were red from the sun or brown from rolling in mud. The women were all wildly different, *Jesus, they all were a pastiche* , Jack One thought; but they

certainly had a type: none of them were over five foot five and those -the sixty-fivers- were giants compared to the norm: five foot even when upright but unshod.

Jack One wondered if any of them -so young- truly knew how wild it all was. He suspected everyone of everything; both what they knew and that of which they were ignorant. He stared at random ones to see how they held up under scrutiny like his.

The kids of each of the four clans were haploid, just copies of copies; they contained no DNA from the moms. They had implants in them to tell them apart *via* embedded signals in the PGC; even the moms had gotten those this year. The men of Jack Three's place were all a little more wild than the rest and yet they managed to still accomplish a lot. In two years the kids were -morphologically- five-years-old. They had begun to look so much like Jack they painted themselves with mud and squirrel blood and wiped the mulch from soaked leaves across their face and chest to distinguish themselves from all the rest.

The children were 11% underweight -from the four-clan mean- and six months behind morphologically from the other clan-kids due to the need for elevated nutrition to activate the calcium ions for their accelerated growth. The lean times here and there signaled the cells to retreat. Jack One saw their bottom bones of the ribs.

He'd watch them come in from the forest in teams.

The moms would clean them and the boys felt renewed but within a few hours were covered in muck and shit; and each boy would make sure his designs didn't match any other boy. Jack watched them dig down for darker mud and scrawl longer across the brow or chest with these black hands.

Jack One was a disciplinarian and didn't think anything but total order would work. *Lion Clan* made him jam his tongue between his most aft molars; and hold his breath until his hands shook. He watched the staid iron of the train cars, the base of trees, the quiet children at the mother's teat. Sometimes he looked right at Jack Three.

However, he was not totally displeased to see that he was wrong, and that the other Jacks had done, *ok* . He even suggested -in a moment of liberalism

during their midday meeting back at *Crow Clan* - quote, *loosening up* to his men. But that had been voted down via a voice vote with not one objection at all; the silence was monolithic following his call for the *nays* to the question: *we shall stay the same as before with no relaxation of rules nor discipline* . The *yays* carried it with orthodox approval and they had smiled at each other and shook hands under the tangled vines and the H-beams and the dissolving sky.

He recalled days like that with some relaxation, as if it was approval of how far they'd come under his watch.

Jack Two was so goddamn in love with everyone he would barely go to sleep , Jack thought then. Jack One thought of his vigilance and incessantly lachrymose eyes as his own *ojos* now spied their camp in the forest off to the west. He held the monocular device to his right eye, with his right hand and kept his left eye open to the close-up world. His right hand trembled so slightly only his own PGC noticed at all.

Jack Two would talk late unto the night with any couples or kids that were sad or uncomfortable in anyway. He tended his flock, and thus, Jack Two's, *Bobcat Clan* had called Jack One, the *PaccekaBuddha: the one that found enlightenment alone*. He winced at that because he knew from whence that *sobriquet* truly came.

The stark difference between the Jacks was the beginning of the comparison, not the end.

Jack Two, he thought, *was certainly more open and caring and almost egoless, and this was not attenuated by their incessant psilocybin rituals and the DMT programs Jack had designed with Isaiah two summers back* . But, they had the most meat: elk, mule & white tail deer, and bear and bird - mostly wild turkey, but some chickens too- than any other clan.

Jack Two had said -Jack One now recalled- that it was that the animals gave themselves freely to him, because he had promised to protect them from the other clans. Jack One had had to laugh at this, because it seemed both insane and true; as half the time his clan -Jack One's clan- didn't find even a whiff of game in their common forest. *Corvid Clan's* hunters would crouch in their blinds for days, their PGCs shutting down all conscious thought, as the forest pulled back from their bows like a wave in ebb tide;

like a pure-black-hulled, mottled-lumbered-masted, dirty-canvas-sailed ship receding out with the surge. They'd come back from 3-day hunts with just four elk and dour looks above the cuts on their arms and hitchhikers in their laces and fissures on their boots at the toe.

They wore the paint of elk blood up to their elbows and the hands cracked red at each knuckle and wrist.

But they -in Jack One's clan- always had plenty, especially since their PGC had reduced their caloric need to a mere five hundred per day. They often ate just one meal and lost no weight; each man's fluctuation -like CO² levels- between 210-215 pounds; each female at -with less variation- between 105 to 107 even. Jack's PGC kept track of each clan member's weight and the clan total like measuring grain for the winter, ammo in the bunkers, water in liters in the cisterns soundly below ground.

Jack One's hanging garden was his *pi éce de resitance*, and as he and his praetorian guard traveled between each concrete shelter under a colonnade of H-beams for acres and acres the tribe members rose and nodded and synced PGCs like kites from inmate to inmate in the yard. As one walked through them it was like an endless passage through an underground cave made up of deciduous plants and strangling ivy and the bells and palms of empurpled and stripped morning glory flowers and humming birds in *nine-seraph* reds fluttering around and making waves as small as landed hurricanes were to the gods. They spoke quietly, but not in whispers. They discussed many things as their bodies handled apoptosis, and myelination, and they download of more and more data from the cloud.

They monitored each perturbation in the ground.

The children loved it -they'd play among the foliage and pretend to be deer- and the wives all marveled at its *grandeur* as they kept furtive eyes on their little fawns. The sky seemed to lower for them to dip ladle in when thirsty and in need of rain, the fruit ripened in time for each bite. Jack's men shook his hand as he walked -in nodding silence- through it most days as he as his Daniels spoke of upcoming plans.

His sleeping quarters were at the north-end and he liked to traverse the full length of the acreage of his clan each day. He had developed this habit after

he had walked away from where he and his wife had slept each night until three nights passed the midnight she had died.

Chatter in *Corvid Clan* was discouraged; eye contact and touching increased. They sought out where they might help one another in corners of the body, and elbows of where their rooms did meet. They asked one another if some task might be allayed, unburdened, held from opposite side.

They -Jack One's tribe- communicated in body mostly now-a-days, and with the light that came from -not merely entered- the eye. The wives knew Jack One would not touch them -never clasp the hand- and that this was a sign of respect for their husband; respect that redounded to them. Each thing was conjoined, the individual receded, the group presented, and each of them stoically rejoiced.

But, there was a pall on the clan after Jack One's wife had died last year in an accident that had no cause or explanation, or relief. Among so much health and wealth, a death of a girl so young was disturbing to everyone's sleep.

It was approaching six months now, and all the snow from that winter had melted off of the peaks; the rivers were high, the aquifers recharged, and below that the earth heated up. His men knew not to suggest anything, to offer no advice; and only one wife had offered to introduce him to her sister but had been rebuked immediately by her husband -one of the Matthew clones- and the upbraiding looks of everyone but Jack himself. Jack One had -in that moment, as the rest of tribe constricted- just lost something of the tension in his face and brow, the part of his bulwarks that held in his true feelings. For that moment his face revealed the secret that he would never be strong enough to reconcile himself to the need humans had to move on and forget.

He knew she -his Matthew's wife- had meant no harm.

If it was so innate, Jack thought, that man couldn't be alone for any length of time at all, it seemed, without losing their mind or their heart; well, then it seemed as if he would -at times- rather be a part -a member- of some other species of beast. He accepted there was no answer to such thing that lived beyond the forest; above him in days when clouds offered no forms or

symbols; and that which waited deep and long underground. He found no patterns in the soil, the rocks, the shadows themselves.

He knew he'd never re-marry, but he never said that aloud. He walked under the hanging gardens and merely hoped nobody would ever mention it again.

His closet friends -his *Daniels of Four* of the first sixteen- knew that it was just the way he was; they knew that he was so made -so convinced by his own mind- that he had love -and would fall in love- exactly once. He felt love was something done once or it wasn't real love at all. He took after Blax that way, that old man up on the hill ten miles away as the blackbird flies; a man who regretted all but his final love; the one held in amber between heaven and earth traversing two epochs of fossilized time.

The Daniels spoke of it in their meetings once each five days in the tower at the north end of the perimeter to their land. They handled business on things of the aquifer and food-reserves -and missions of forty expeditionary teams abroad- all with a tension that only relaxed once they came to the issue of Jack and his two-season dead bride.

Jack had been slower than the other Jacks to find someone; they had been together only one year -about half the average of each man. But he had adored her, and when she didn't get pregnant that first year he had thought little of it. She had been upset and sad and blamed herself -as women tragically and honorably do- and he had finally had Isaiah take a look at the shape of her womb, the ratio between its height and its width. Isaiah looked too at her blood. It was merely a protein coding problem; not allowing the ovum to descend. Isaiah offered to implant an egg, but *Janusaw* had refused and Jack thus nodded as well.

He deferred to his woman in womanly things, and even now he rarely blamed himself for this.

She was only seventeen and they had agreed that they had plenty of time and so she took a supplement instead; *letting nature* - she had said with a smile and laying her right hand on his chest as he collected water to his lower lids- *take its course*.

Jack One had told her that her ovum was not necessary as his sperm carried all 46-chromosomes anyway; and like for all the men -in all four clans- the offspring would be 100% him. But she had wanted to produce something, even if it was just the *basket* -as she had called it- *to carry his scion within , tote it to the mountain top and let the gods take a look at him and bless him.* He remembered her exact words; and he had often written them down and burned the paper in candleflame late at night. He remembered everything she ever said, he thought as each memory begat other recollections; each word of hers lay eggs in the nest of his mind.

She spoke rarely, he now recalled; she never wanted to interrupt his silences.

But, when she spoke it was poetry and it moved him in ways he hid from even himself until he was alone and swaddled by winter outside and her clothes he piled in the bed within. Winter also allowed him to place her old garments in his outer-shell pockets and his hands around them thus keeping his fist from becoming a ball; preventing the nails from digging into the palm. He squeezed the cotton articles she wore closest and let the wool items she layered now layer him.

He thought of that now and felt his throat tighten and his eyes loosen a bit. *Had he been too insouciant, too cavalier, was there something he could have seen or done? Jesus,* he thought, *we have such command over the body and environment now.* But he never had another sentence for hours after he thought that.

It seemed beyond inexplicable; yet he could never move past that it all felt completely designed.

No such thing could happen by accident now , Jack thought, whilst barely thinking their robustness was limited to the men and children of the clan - who shared all 46-chromosomes- not the women of disparate DNA. It was as if their -the men's- strength was shroud to their women, and that his woman had merely not donned this protective hide; as if this was why -the only reason- she had died.

He was leader here, *and she knew that ,* he thought as this articulation of his duty to his men and the tribe *ricocheted* off his conscious mind and the Doppler whine of each time it hit skull echoed as it retreated away. He was

involved for eighteen hours a day; they only needed four hours sleep now with the modification to their genome. He had spent two hours a day with her in seclusion; that had been their deal made before they wed.

He worked to lead them all -the tribe- and left unseen things -inside him and inside her- to the gods who he felt were on his -on their- side.

But maybe that was not enough, he thought; maybe he should have been more fluid, flexible, and had her around him all day. That was how Jack Two did it, him and his wife *Lucatia* were like one Greek beast; *the bullheaded man and the fawn*, he used to say and make everyone laugh a bit nervously. A man that serious found it hard to convince anyone he too told jokes; or at least made half-wry comments here and there in the dark places of his mien.

Jack Four had not been heard from in nearly five months and they had all begun to get worried beyond mere anxiety and annoyance. It's why he thought of Jack Four always last.

His men -Jack Four's- had a new leadership group, *three men obviously competent and admired among the quarter of a million of their kind*, Jack One thought as his coder gave constant census updates that he trusted to be true. He could track each man with their genome like the ancients knew stars that moved as the earth turned away.

But, Jack Four was needed, Jack went on in his thoughts; Jack Four was necessary and it was his lack of communication that worried them. But the census numbers flickered like losing radio signals turned to fuzz and squawk and static; their numbers had dropped precipitously, then shot back up, Jack had noticed as the thermal and FLIR imaging had shown things -like heat signatures of men, movements irrational, stasis for too long- *things*, Jack thought, *things differently than the coder's census reports*.

Jack had ignored it for the first few months or so, but now he felt something was amiss.

He -Jack Four- had blocked his own GPS signal weeks before he left and not even Isaiah could track him, Jack One was told. Jack One had visions of doom, as if he knew that something was brewing in that man's mind. He -Jack Four- was always apart, never comfortable with being one of four

Jacks. The rest of them found their individuation within the context of their tribe, but Jack Four had this need to do his own thing and now Jack One feared something catastrophic was out there looking through lenses twice as powerful and locked on to him with a surprise in his trap of a heart.

The worst part, Jack One thought, *was that he -Jack Four- had left his woman, and she was unable to make sense of it all.* Starr was equal parts frightened and staid, fearing his retribution if she spoke too much in his absence, Jack thought. He watched her before and after they spoke. He looked for cracks in surface, and anything unmoving where one ought to have joints. But the fear remained like pollen or dust maybe on the skin. *She behaved stoically*, Jack One thought, and was not easily convinced to discuss with Jack One anything he -Jack Four- had said before he had left.

These women of theirs were all loyal to a fault. Jack knew the data, in was in the genes of anyone attached to any of them; in the genes of anyone attractive to the Jack's and their genome as far back as the original *Ljort*. He believed this the way they all believed it. They lived it.

Jack Four had obviously instructed her on what to say, Jack One thought as he replayed their conversations held by the longhalls and through the courtyard as each of Jack Four's men watched he and Starr take short walks within the *agoge* of *Wolf Clan's* tall inner walls. Jack could tell -via his coder's analysis of her cortisol- that even she was starting to wonder if Jack was ever coming back or sending for her again. She took the other three Jack's saliva for his *medea-gene*, but she claimed to never know where it was going. She only knew that one of Jack's men -with a four-man team along with him as guard- took it each month to some unknown location and they -none of them- ever returned.

A different man would return -alone- with the saliva of Jack Four for the three Jacks and Blax.

Also, each month all four clans met -man-to-man- and shook hands in the two-day *moot*; and this passed sufficient DNA *via* the *medea* v.2.0. Mere touch was enough.

But for the Jacks, saliva -or blood- was still needed. Jack Four's chiral half was delivered within 72-hours of theirs; it would arrive to his woman and she'd send one of *Wolf Clan's* men to deliver it to each of the Jack's and

each time Jack One took two vials and then headed up to see Blax and the Bust.

They took the scotch-shots and tried to pretend it was, *ok*; that it wasn't a huge show of disrespect to do it this way; that it didn't lack heart. They spoke of other things as the whisky warmed up the throat, the pique heated the brain.

For the first month they had still held their own five-man *moot* , and just -merely- poured Jack Four's vial into a glass and had done the ritual as normal as his glass remained full. Five square -cube- glasses filled; four drunk down; Jack's full of amber -with his, their, DNA inside- and the three remaining Jacks and Blax around the slab, like a dismasted animal. They were an automaton it seemed, looking about for anything that would help their eyes seize upon the world and make sense -intent- from all this chaos of data and stimulus that overwhelmed their brains.

Their bodies took the gene, the coding, the antidote to self-immolation. Their minds rejected the fake hand. The religious ritual made profane. They all learned to hate to play what was once a noble game.

They were restored with no skip in the heartbeat; no skip that a machine would detect.

The wounded pride took longer to heal. Fighting yourself was hardest when you lost and somehow not that great even in victory. In these internecine battles one felt bad no matter what.

They had thousands of applications from civilians to join them, but they had declined each one. The underground world of bikers and workers and the flotsam & jetsam of society's rejects had been made aware of something going on somewhere and internet chatter rose to levels that Isaiah and MO had to take note of finally. But each Jack had known this was counter to their mission. The whole point was valence, self-similarity, loyalty in the blood not the mere ideas.

Men could claim to hold ideals, Jack One thought, but those faltered. What stood erect were bones, what flowed no matter what was blood, what could be counted upon was true brotherly love.

Three of four Jacks believed this without so much as a moment of doubt. Isaiah believed it; and MO believed it a third of the time. Jack Three believed it so much he was loyal to Jack Four regardless of what it meant for himself; it's always the most sincere that confounds the man who believes in something a mere 99%. Jack One would see blood, Jack Four ideals, and Jack Three would see where these things meet. Jack Two loved them all for different reasons. And Blax saw less and less of what they truly were.

"One drop of blood, contains all the world," Jack Three would say one day, when nobody understood his reasoning. He saw what the others missed: you can be loyal to blood while spilling nearly all of it. Jack Three saw not each of them as important, but the lineage, back and forward. He saw the solipsism of the now, the vanity in each of them, and thus -finally- the truth of which Jack of Jacks was equipped to carry the blood furthest along.

Jack One thought of the last meeting -those months ago- where Jack Four had proposed meeting some of these men -the civilians of which he held the *dossiers* - for the purpose of doing *recon* on their dispositions. That meeting unfurled now for Jack like banner, war-flag, semaphore for cavalry and the second line of one's troops.

It hit Jack One all at once as if revealed, not thought. *Jack Four was out organizing those men*, he said word by word inside his head, *how many from the millions of feral Americans?* He then thought, *and there were still three quarters of a million men of their own genome who had elected to stay in the culture - writ large- as reconnaissance, outposts of sorts. What was going on outside their forest? What plots were hatching? What hatchlings were in emerging from nests down below?*

"Jesus Christ," Jack One then said aloud and put down the scope and looked instead down at his own feet, his own boots, muddy and dusty and covered in hitchhikers tan and prickly in a *Poisson* distribution of things the high plains desert made. The brown and tan spheres of spikes adhered to his laces and socks like the head of maces. He had re-read that old *dossier* from Isaiah to the men of phase III of the project begun twenty years ago. He was nearly twenty himself now, but thirty morphologically, and fully grown into a man; he had been raised to think they had two hundred years or more left.

The last thing, he thought, that he wanted was to fight his brother Jack Four, *alongside a bunch of his own kind mixed in like some pastiche, some amalgam with regular -alloyed, corruptible- men* .

He scrunched up his nose and felt his mouth almost spit out his own tongue. He felt disgust and it made his guts squirm, his hands feel dirty and wet.

That it was not *the last thing* exactly, not the worst thing -the idea that Jack One might hate one thing more, worse- well, that thought fluttered away as he toggled back and forth between fighting and forgiving Jack Four. The ugliness of the envisioned *contretemps* was so offensive that it overwhelmed his exaggeration of what was first and what was last inside his heart *vis-à-vis* his brother. His hatred ebbed, his sadness flowed. He stared out over their forest as the trees were light green at top in the sun, black down below in ravine.

The rocks were white and red as the clay warmed underneath the noon.

He supposed -as if he was sucked into the funnel of the tornados of the plains, and not himself the thing that spun amongst the dust- that this was just the way it was, *their genome demanded a fight; a complaint, something to set right, and always -incessantly- something to hate, to call the enemy, to oppose*.

It was like the immune system that attacked itself, unable to rest on its laurels when the parasites had fled, unable to colonize unless they broke skin and bled.

Jack Four was out there getting ready to turn what they had all built into noble rubble just to prove that he could, Jack thought with certainty gathering like clear drops to black clouds, like imbricate and scaled fish to shields of whole schools, like each memory made up a man with history and not mere -singular- events.

“What a dick,” Jack One said and laughed because he knew he was no different than Jack at center; *separate only in whatever was in store*, he thought. It’s the exact shit he would do if he felt any pique and vexation at all. He couldn’t hate him for it; shit, he half admired him for it, but as he toggled his DM to the other Jacks he knew that he’d have to tie Jack to the mast and kill everyone that he led. *There’d be no half-measures*, he thought.

“Go ahead Jack,” Jack Two said as Jack Three pinged the *comms* that showed he too was on the line and listening to Jack One.

Jack One just breathed for a second and looked out over the forest and felt good for a moment. He didn’t yet say what he thought to the Jacks.

Maybe he would go see Blax , he thought, *even though it was good to let the old man be* . Blax was always polite when Jack One came by, and the wife - Valance- remained mostly hidden; off somewhere with their baby. Jack thought of the way each image of Blax and Valance appeared, the child at the breast, the eyes off to the side of his own. He thought of the furs -pelts- the darkness of each thing between brown and grey hairs, soil and wetness, ice of white around edges. It seemed colder and colder up there on *Lot 45’s* ridge these days.

That kid was different looking, as if -well , Jack didn’t even finish the thought. But it was like the way one could notice beauty in animals or machines.

The Bust dressed like the men did, like the Jacks did, *which meant like Blax did* , Jack One thought and smiled wanly to himself. She wore cowboy single-action revolvers on her hips and a bullet belt in an X over her chest; she had Prussian blue war paint on her right-side of face like the maul of a bear claw. Jack wondered if she wore it each day, or as apotropaic each time he came.

He recalled that she arrived the day they all left those many months -nearly two years- ago.

He had watched as the motorcycle’s exhaust drone came on them and saw Blax smile so big that Jack had thought he might swallow his own face. Blax had -as the dust from the road preceded her- hugged him and told him he loved him and Jack had been taken aback by the affection and the grin that revealed more teeth than a dolphin, he remembered thinking at the time. In this recall he saw more of the space in the mouth than teeth, but he still felt the same warmth.

When Valance had unsaddled off the bike with that bandolier and those sixguns he knew she had ridden from Pueblo like that and not even been

hassled at all. That was the way they all did things, never asking permission, and he guessed there was no reason she should be any different. But he never really asked why.

He saw -again- that tiny five-foot three-inch frame disembarking from that dusty *Husqvarna* street-fighter and the dogs running up to her and then sitting as she addressed them in short bursts. He recalled she then took off her aviators and smiled at Blax like a woman who is in more than just love. It was as if she was in deep to both the falls and the stream. *Her eyes were blue like noons none of them would see; and the sclera was like the belly of a shark*, Jack had thought.

It was a look that Jack had never seen. It was something old people did he thought somewhat idiosyncratically. He couldn't always make connections so he made things up to see if it worked. He used words like children turned building-blocks this way and that. He made up stories or reasons why and ended up with something built with three edges at least. She was not just glad to see Blax, but glad to be seen, *glad to be again alive and among the living*, Jack One had surmised.

He had no reason to think that, it was all instinct, *but*, he thought, *she had a depth -a weariness- to her that most young women do not have*. The two - Blax and the Bust- had embraced and muffled sounds of affection and greetings were heard. Blax introduced them quickly and then told him to give him thirty days to settle in. Jack agreed and left in the H1 and -as the diesel engine rattled the steering wheel and his hands- he nodded once to the Bust through the windshield. She had nodded politely but nothing more, and back then the absence of warmth toward him had assured him that she was likely the best possible woman in the world.

III. 2038 e.v.

He listened as she spoke and allowed for her halting -tentative- prose. She was thinking out loud, as most speech is, and so he did not interrupt her. She drank from her mug at times and began speaking immediately after swallowing as if the time imbibing had helped create many ideas in her head all at once.

She got them out with rapidity and he found himself understanding her more and more. He nodded and she nodded back finding in him someone sympathetic now and this allowed her to relax a bit and expand.

“The point is not how *you* feel, which I of course understand. The point is that I feel a certain way too. And that our feelings demand a kind of war. It’s not the *kinda* thing that can be diluted where each of us get 50% of what we want. It’s zero sum. Either you win or I do and I hate those, daddy,” she said and paused and searched around for her *teddy* which had fallen from the bed when she had clambered on twelve minutes ago.

“If,” Blax began, “I allow you to win always, you will not respect me and I will not respect myself; and you must feel the same way. We are more alike than different, but the differences are important, *ok* ? Now, you must stand your ground just to maintain some dignity and self-respect; and earn my respect. This I agree with. I’m not even sure I was right to send you away, maybe I should have just dealt with it. But, I had to make a judgment call based upon what I thought was -what I knew to be- true of me, of my limitation, my weakness, not yours.”

“You say that,” she replied, “but I think you thought I’d be tempted and I’d act in a way you’d object to and that I would be at fault.” She rose from her lean toward the floor to gather her bear and objected in words that rose and fell with the twist and turn of her body -now upright- and spoke straight into his chest with her eyes. She stared straight ahead. Her hands clutched the tiny black bear he had made for her eleven years ago from real bear pelt and the stuffing inside the giant stalks of their sunflowers that grew in dozens on the southern side; heads the size dinner plates, height of nearly three meters by autumn each year. He’d made eyes for the stuffed toy from shaved brass casings -spent shells- the primer dotted -from the firing pin- which produced the illusion of glare from a sun.

The little bear had claws soft made from pinecones he’d stripped and glued in place.

“Ok, maybe, and that is not fair; not fair to you. You’re right. But even if I could guarantee your impeccable behavior I would have still feared my own insecurity. Look, do you realize what most men do? They do not admit to being insecure; I will guarantee you that.

“I am an exceedingly rare man in my ability to be emotionally honest and admit that I am insecure *vis-à-vis* my sexuality, my primacy, my value, my worth to you or anyone,” he said. He could feel his anger rise. He was embarrassed and hated having to say this shit aloud.

“Yes, I doubt myself all the time papa, and when you doubt me too, it compounds it,” she said with a kind of plea, now looking into his eyes. He saw her lip was wet, her eyes wide, her cheeks as red as that morning’s sun that split the *agoge*’s concrete and containers. It was the day he stared longer than most at the rise.

“Ok, I cannot wave that away with my hand. I cannot. It must be dealt with head on. I can apologize and think through it and figure out what is going on, but I can also say that I know that it was not the primary motivation for your banishment. I can say that.

“I just didn’t want to put myself or the Jacks in that position. What we had to do was hard enough without the sexual tension and distraction innate, Valance, innate to a -in a- beautiful girl. You females think you are just like men, you are not. Men are like a flock of birds, each one is irrelevant, the flock is what is noticeable; but women are like a single predator with its eyes locked on you.

“We notice you, immediately, are enraptured, in awe. And you are not that impressed with yourselves or anyone -except babies- and I remind you that to a man a woman is as impressive and consuming a phenomenon as an infant is to you; to women. You must get this.

“And if you would just try to see it that way -truly try- I think you could see that it made no more sense for you to be here during that time than it would to have a baby here for me to take care of,” he immediately regretted the analogy and showed his chagrin with a move of the head down and to the side.

“I’m a baby?” she said with a mouth now agape. The eyes were more than wide now, they too were wet.

“Not to me, I mean to a woman; that analogy sucked. I mean no more than it would make sense for you and I to speak if there was a baby right here between us that you had to attend to.”

“Well, I do like babies,” she said with a smirk she used to squint the eyes, to close them up just enough to keep them from melting and spilling over the lids. It worked on one side, the side that lifted and revealed that same eye-tooth they all had, that crooked grin that made the whole world tilt a bit. But, the other eye did leak and she felt it cool the cheek. He saw it too and ran his left-hand thumb over it, wiping it away, knowing full well it didn’t remove the feelings that made it rain. All it did was let her know he’d stop it if he could; it was his only response to the pain.

She had felt she was carrying a baby for a while but she had not said anything; she had had no periods in the years she had been away and the seed spoke to her she thought; but it was strange to her that in three years the whole inner world would stop, and the seed would not die, the blood would not wash it away, but it would not yet grow.

Now that she was home, she felt it would begin. Her stomach -her womb- even now roiled.

She was eager to get her bitterness about being sent away flushed out of her system. She worried it might stress the child. She had begun to think for two. Her world split right then she felt, and maybe her one eye’s tear was the river between her and where her babe would be born. She didn’t want Blax to wipe any more of the water away.

She felt better already and was so happy to be home. So, she held his hand to keep it from her face. A few drops landed in her lap.

“Thank God,” he said with an exhale of gratitude to the gods for her not escalating their fight over his inept analogy. The danger of comparison is that each thing infects the other where different; edges bleed.

“Why you say that?” she asked with as few words as possible. Each word felt like a pump to her waters.

“I just mean you just totally cut me some slack for my baby analogy and I am grateful to the universe and all it contains for that slack,” he said with the tone of the humor extant in total defeat. He let his head drop and breathed out heavily.

“It’s ok, I get it. But, you can’t keep me cooped up forever,” she said.

“Why not?”

“I don’t know but I am sure there are reasons, Blax,” she said and shoved him in the neck and face with the teddy bear as he spoke. She rarely used his name. He took note of it and wondered what it meant. No answers came, and the question itself softly went as he thought of things to say to her.

“Can I tell you something totally off subject?” he asked clearing the skin on his nose of some fuzzy material the stuffed animal had left as residue.

“Ok,” she said and bounced a bit on the bed. Her body was helping clear her eyes she thought.

“Isaiah has cobbled together our entire genetic line going back to the fourteen hundreds. And in 1622 your and my great grandfather -like forty times removed- was a Scotsman named Sir Robert Henderson. Which is where we get our name. Now this guy was commanding a regiment of Scottish mercenaries in the Dutch army,” he spoke and then she interrupted him.

“Dutch as in the,” she asked dangling it.

“The Netherlands,” he stated.

“Copy,” she was tight lipped now. She let the last tear dry on her face. Later she’d imagine him licking just the salt away.

“And Sir Robert was fighting alongside his men in combat with the Spanish,” he got going and she rang in immediately.

“Those bastards,” she said of this new enemy she had not known of two seconds before but was now apparently committed to hating with all she had as she punched her own left palm with her tiny right fist; all of which made him smile as he went on.

“Right, and those bastards shot Sir Robert and he died,” he said and was getting ready to move on when she blurted out.

“Jesus, is that how you tell a story, all, *here’s you great grandfather and he’s dead now ?*” she said with a mad face. That it had been 416 years between then and now mattered naught to her.

“Angel, what I am saying is that he died like a man. He is quoted, or rather, there is a quote about him, to wit: quote, *he stood all the fighting in as great of danger as any common soldier, still encouraging, directing, and acting*

with his Pike in his hand. At length he was shot in the thigh, close quote. Now, that may not seem all that interesting, but to me it is.

“This was back when a shot to the thigh -in the thigh- could kill a man. They had no modern methods to stop the infection or femoral arterial hemorrhaging and the man died just like that, bam.” Blax snapped his fingers and paused, “anyway, he fought with his men, side by side, not in some elevated position, not away from the maelstrom; in it, like any common soldier.”

Blax stopped and stared at her eyes.

“Like you papa,” she said. She was eager to show she knew things, and how those things connected. She was eager to balm him with praise because she knew he felt chagrined for earlier; and -she suspected- for things even earlier than that.

“Well, yes and no. Better than me in some ways. Anyway, that is a man whose DNA is us, you and me. Ok, and that is not some nebulous moral courage, it’s bodily courage. Because as you well know, moral courage is in the body, it’s here,” he touched her lower abdomen, “and here,” he touched her breast above her heart, “here,” he said and grabbed her gently but firmly with his large hand around her thin neck, a move he did from time to time which she loved so much her eyes closed and her head fell back; held against her own Atlas vertebrae and half against his shoring hand.

She felt like an Olympian angel taken in hand by Zeus and put into a fugue state so that he may read her thoughts. She submitted to such spells he cast with his hands and that voice he used between pauses.

“Yes, papa,” she said in a low and slow manner limited by his embrace; he spoke to her with his hand around her throat and his face close to her now.

“We have this courage, but it is scary, that’s what makes it courage. We push through, you and I do; we do it. We do it alone and together, even when we are apart we are together, joined by our similar -our exact- DNA. That gives me a comfort and an emboldening feeling that I cannot quite express to you angel, and I need you to know that. I feel you with me at all times.

“It’s not the thing a rational man feels or if he does he won’t say aloud. But, I am sick and tired of being a rational man. It’s not me, I’m not that man. I am -look- I am the guy who goes and lives with the cannibals just like *the Author* , and I have lived a thousand lives,” he said.

“I know, papa bear,” she said as she went limp in his embrace.

“Baby, I mean that I have had many ideas on who I am. And I’ve worn each suit of clothes authentically, no matter how radically different they have been. And I didn’t know it at the time, but this has made me able to understand people. I can understand each kind of person, even those radically different from me. But only because I have been them; I’ve been every kind of man.”

“And you’ve been *with* every kind of *wo-man* ,” she said bifurcating the *wo* and the *man* with jesting vex, as he ignored her and pressed on.

“I’ve been everything. But anyway, well, you know my history,” he said -thinking of work and adventure and *contretemps* - as she aroused herself and brought her arm up to his shoulder.

“Boy do I,” she said -thinking of other women- and punched him in the arm hard; it actually hurt him. Her knuckles had dorsal fin-like edges; her force was full. He instinctively buried the pain; speaking as if he didn’t still feel the sting.

“Well, I don’t bring it up to bray or make you uncomfortable, I say it so you know that most men who have a position or two at my age, have had it their whole lives. I mean look at my brother,” he said.

“Must I?” she said with a bobble head that rose and fell in his grip.

“Angel, look at how he’s never been anything other than what he is right now. And I also know I am likely to change in the future; change in all but a few core ways,” he said into her face as he spoke above her. *That was why his brother didn’t understand him, he had never been anything others than what he was . Empathy comes from experience as much as from biochemistry , he reasoned. Empathy came from mimicry and he had mimicked how many types of men?* he asked himself.

“Namely, me,” she said as he held her tighter about the neck and she relaxed again.

“That is certain; you will always be my wife, and my daughter and my best friend. You are 100% non-negotiable forever. But I know myself now, and I would have blown it had I met you at age twenty-five. See, that is my point, it is that my core convictions were repeated over and over from the beginning, but I didn’t know which were core until I had sixty-five years of data. I didn’t see the thread then, back then, but I see it now.”

“Oh,” she said.

“And so, I worry that you need the same time and experience to discover what is consistently you and what is not,” he said.

“Like with men?” she asked incredulously.

“Yeah,” he said softly.

“Oh, hell no. I don’t need that, that is a *man* thing, you guys need to sew your oats. Women don’t need that at all. You had no instruction. Nobody told you. But I had you papa. You explained it. And it’s the same reason I don’t crave bad food, you explained why it’s bad, and I was never in need of it, and I was never around it. This matters. You think you were a mess because of you, but it was the way you were raised,” she said. She forgave him for his sins.

“Ok,” he said and used his right hand, raising it from her neck, to cup and support her head and bring her back up from the dip; he then released her neck as she adjusted to having to support her own weight again.

“Steven yelled at me for shooting prairie dogs,” she said *apropos* of nothing.

“Yelled?” he said as his eyes got wide. His heartrate increased and endogenous *chems* began to flow.

“Well, upbraided me,” she clarified, “and Tania, I think was gossiping about me.” She touched her own throat with her hand to measure how much territory it covered; it was half of his big bear paw. So, she squeezed her own throat tighter now as he spoke to her.

“I have no doubt. Women are aggressive in those ways; I forgot to tell you about that,” he said with a grimace. He watched her measure her own throat and smiled at her exploratory cuteness. She was so childlike sometimes that

he felt scared for her, and then for himself when he realized she was no child at all, but a creature like him who would someday die.

“No,” she released her own throat, “you told me, I just didn’t understand it until I felt the looks from the people on their medical staff, then I knew she had talked shit,” she said.

“Oh, yeah?” he asked; he was genuinely was curious. He knew people -saw through people- like this too; he could just tell that people talked behind his back. But he was always dubious about his own perspicacity and to see her with the same instincts as him felt good and made him want to dig deeper; the way one touches a mirror to reach the glass and also the self reflected back.

“Yeah, they were cold to me, and acted like I was unclean,” she said with a chomp of the mouth.

“Did it hurt? Your feelings?” he asked in two distinct sentences.

“Yeah, at first, I felt sad, but then I just thought that you’d say that they were jealous and that women are aggressive -or show their innate aggression- by reputation destroying since they don’t fight. You know, *mano y mano* ,” she bounced again on the bed with fists raised and elbows at ninety-degree angles.

“Did you tell her that?” he asked with that turn of the head, a tilt and one eyebrow raised that he didn’t know he did but everyone else noticed.

“No,” she said as she looked at his eyes now. She had been preparing for their intensity and felt now she could bear their dark light. They were like the opening to caves with fires built at the back; in territory one encroached upon and hovered around and looked for shadows coming out.

She then thought of the *terroir* of where her child would grow. Her womb became a real place to her. She thought nothing of all her words inside her head that she never expressed. She thought nothing of *Proverbs 18:21* even as the King James Bible lay open to it. It lay on the small desk Blax had been working at for the days before she returned. It was underlined and she saw the horizontal scratch of his ink, but not the letters above. *She was giving her baby -their baby- a nice clean start* , she thought.

All my babies , she said in her mind to her belly now.

18. JACKS L NDON

American Liberals care more for animal rights than they do for human rights. They are animated by this compassion for the thing most soft, pitiable, guiltless. But hatred is the central element of our struggle. Hatred that is intransigent... hatred so violent that it propels a human being beyond his natural limitations FOIA.gov/CIA File; 1966 [Guevara, Ernesto]

China has 5,000 years of spiritual culture, but for more than 60 years it has been ruled by the CCP's dictatorship, which destroyed that ancient culture and violently imposed atheism. In this framework of spiritual emptiness, *Falun Dafa* has spread reviving lost traditional culture and attracted more than 100 million practitioners in China... then leader *Jiang Zeming*, fearing that *Falun Dafa*'s popularity and the promotion of traditional values were a threat to state control, the regime launched a period of brutal persecution, defaming their reputations, running them financially and harming them physically Panampost.com Mar 1, 2017 [Marty, Antonella]

Thus, the overriding goal of State justice is to maintain society's stability by providing a mandatory alternative to do-it-yourself justice. All other goals of State justice are secondary to that main one. In particular the State has no interest in the overriding goal of justice in small scale non-state societies The World Before Tomorrow [Diamond, Jared]

I. 2020 e.v.

He looked at the detail of the neck; the water inscribed upon it, as if the head had collapsed, been liquefied, fed -in fact- to the arm, the wounded arm vascular from a beating heart, and constricted veins. The arm two-thirds the total of the man in bronze.

He saw how the earth rose under leverage of the steel tool, the striation of each deltoid, tricep and the ribbons of the fore, how it all strained the core of the sculpture and he -his mind behind his eyes, his soul deep down inside

something that was above him now- he could feel something above him now.

His heart hurt, his gut squirmed, and he knew he was hated. And hatred -he knew- was information.

It was something he often used as fuel; he ignored how it burnt the valves, pocked the piston head, marred the cylinder walls. *The antipathy for him was earned from work* , he thought, he had labored so incessantly to rise above his station that they could only feel one final thing for him: hatred. He still thought it was what he *did* , not who he *was* that mattered. He did not yet understand the world nearly as much as he thought.

Each time he thought he was sufficiently wised up. He knew nothing of why he'd never be a member -let alone a leader- of any tribe.

There's an insult implicit in striving ; he thought, and he felt he should have seen this as he had looked behind him to his wake. But, he too felt the insult when anyone strove to put distance between themselves and hard work, the imprimatur of the proletarian life, its trappings, garb, *argot* ; so he was not as immune to such conservatism of spirit as he may have liked to think. He did not incessantly grow, or even strive, he often retreated, he shrank back, he let himself -in some versions of himself- in fact die.

And thus he had read the letter from his father as he felt it was meant: as a wounding. *And a wound - he felt- is knowledge gained from the data of hate.*

The photo of the sculpture he'd been staring at -*in lieu* of the letter- hung on his prison wall, grey and white on grey; *the blues and greens and blacks contained in grey are manifold* , he thought, *there is so much to grey if you wash away all other hues . Color blindness allows for contrast acuity. People don't know that; predators do.* "I know it," he said aloud.

He dropped the letter as if the hand could not hold it. As if its weight in ink -in conceit- was ten times that of the paper-page.

MO had given him that photo of the sculpture -of *Labor* , by Szukalski - that he stared at; given it to him as a gift. The guards never tore it when his cell was tossed. They were respectful of art at least. They had rules too. *This was not China*, he thought, *where they harvested your organs; at least not*

yet . China , he went on in thought, where they locked up 1-million Muslims before 2020 and the world -even the Muslim world- said not one word .

This was how he knew everyone was full of shit; evidence such as this.

The Chinese had figured out what the West never had; well, not since the East India Company, well, the inmate thought in his endless caveats, not since John McNaughton -a rational Scot- had said in the Pentagon Papers: Strikes at population targets (per se) are likely not only to create a counterproductive wave of revulsion abroad and at home, but greatly to increase the risk of enlarging the war with China or the Soviet Union. Destruction of locks and dams, however -if handled right- might offer promise. Such destruction does not kill or drown people. But shallow-flooding the rice, it leads -after a time- to widespread starvation (more than a million?) unless food is provided -which we could offer to do at the conference table.

He thought of that quote and stared away from the image of the Polish artist's great paean to labor.

Covert and delayed -second order- action with the promise of massive bribery -and the deep malice behind it ignored- as your country's foreign policy was the epitome of rational. All without guilt. What good did it do to feel guilt? There were so many moving parts; you as a man were just one. In their machine you would always be mere part. Ah, the cells in your body said the same thing; all but those that refused to obey.

But - he shook away those thoughts- but now the West wanted colonialism without the mess and muss.

It wanted deals made now before a fight -deals their foils couldn't refuse- and thus the show of force of the ancient -honest- cultures was taboo; even second order shit was not enough removed. The West kissed ass and went soft as the Chinese got macabre, as the Trobriander Islanders directly cut a man in half; but they all -each nation, each tribe- ate three meals a day no matter which game they played.

The rational man -with his conscience- did the so-called right thing and paid for his dinner non pecunia olet; the trickster bird working with the wolf plotted for their calf, but the crow could say it rightly never killed a

thing, it merely ate what the wolf choked and tore apart; and -finally- the lizard reacted plainly without anything beyond reflexive munching murder. He saw the same three levels at play in each culture, and the West was gonna lose in a fight with China if it didn't realize the crow and wolf combined had man outmatched; the sino-ravens had a plan.

When would people look up and down the line? When would people even acknowledge biology, physics, God?

China, he thought with admiration, got away with a thousand times the crimes against minorities versus the West and nobody in Hollywood, the Senate, or Saudi Arabia or Turkey or Egypt said one word as China just paid more and more and more with the baboon-smile behind each payment, the malice that made everyone nervous as they uneasily took the bribes. Everyone knew the Chinese didn't really care to be liked. And once you know a man -or a people- don't care to be liked? Shit, the bribe from a man who doesn't care if you like him, is more menacing than the threat from the man who needs your approval.

He knew this because he had been just such a man: threatening his rivals all-the-while needing social approval.

The West -so eager to be liked- bribed Pakistan and got nothing for it! What a joke, he thought. Modern Western men are children.

He too had been this child.

He accepted prison the way some men accept poverty or death; as inevitable. You know at some point that you cannot follow their rules, even the reasonable ones. At some point you don't want to be liked either, and your enemies -at that moment- realize -right then- that that was when they were fucked. At some point you see your fate and embrace it.

And fate -he knew- well, to accept your fate was wisdom .

*His mother now had full-blown Alzheimer's according to the letter; and within a minute or two he had pondered if that was even true. It was not beyond his family to lie. *Pleading poverty -which the old man just did- was beneath him; the stilted way he had phrased his bereavement was ingenuine, it lacked heart.* All things, he said of his father, *all things he did lacked heart* . And this made the inmate think he was being lied to; for once*

you remove the heart, man can lie so much more freely, easily, competently. The inmate had almost no idea how both true and untrue such a thing was.

All at once the statement birthed and ate itself.

It never occurred to any of them, the inmate continued, to end it; to end life. They'd squeeze every day -no matter how horrid each day was- from the total. They were greedy for all the wrong things: money, life. Even when the money couldn't be spent or wasn't enough, even when the life was only comprised of pain . So old but so lacking in wisdom, it was like watching old children, he thought with this bulging contempt as he elevated himself over his family, his culture, his species like a storm cloud, like an eclipse; then like a disintegrating rain soaking below roots and gravel to bedrock, like a moon that would soon enough be shone upon, lowering, under the earth.

They would bankrupt themselves to care for her at end-of-life for no good goddamn reason. Why live with Alzheimer's, why? What normal person would want a life like that? It made no sense, it wasn't even you, anymore, you were a ghost in the machine. You were already dead. It was just pain for no reason, he thought; and this idea was offered from -by- a man who thought pain was good, was noble and that men -too often- ran from pain. *But, this pain,* he countered his own reproach, *this type of pain imparted no wisdom, it was pointless. It's the same reason you put a wounded animal out of its misery; he has nothing left to learn .*

"He shall not recover," he said aloud.

He realized then he'd never speak to his mother again, not ever again -even if she lived- for she was gone. *And what had their last words been?* he asked himself and didn't think that the fact that he couldn't recall had indicted his steel-trap memory at all. She stared at him in his mind and was mute; and he refused to ask.

He almost thought of why he'd had come to prison, but the bubble never actually formed in the mind, let alone rise. It was a hypocrisy extant but unacknowledged; a confession he'd only give to God; for only God would understand it could be true and yet not wipe away all the other *rationales* - all the noble and ornate reasons- he had done what he had done.

“Only God would allow all things to be true at once,” he said into the cell.

Man must sort, select, pick one. And if the inmate revealed to mankind his most base reason, the reason down low, closest to his *basal ganglia*, his ancient brain, well, that would be the one his enemies -all of mankind- would pick as the *true* reason, the *only* reason.

God allowed reasons manifold. Thus, the inmate would confess to God alone.

Then -inside the mind all jammed with thought- he let the proto-memory of an email sent -in December 2016- form the edge of an engram, but no inner core. He deleted -in real life and in this near-memory- the body and recipient, and the sender, and the algorithms he had built. He just allowed it to briefly arise in the mind as frame -empty frame- to what he had helped set in motion a few years ago.

He thought only of MO. He did not think of Steven and the *Reddit* post, the finger that hit *send*, the face that grinned. He forgot all about the little girl he'd bragged to -and read from a book to- as she fell asleep upon his chest. He barely remembered being free.

For he never had been, and he knew that now.

He rubbed his neck with his right hand; he pulled the shoulders back; he tried -for the 10,000th time- to lift the head off the spine just a pound or two. He now made the pages that he built edges for populate with other info; the note to his lawyer and the BOP doctors. The black letters of each word, each name, each case, still seemed wet upon the page. He saw: *Ralston* 167, *Walker v. Benjamin*, from 2002; he saw paragraphs from decisions that held doctor's in prison liable for violations of the 8th amendment. He smiled at the irony. *If they denied him meds he could sue under constitutional law and win; there was already precedent; shit, he already had won*, he thought.

Free men had no rights, he thought, *but inmates? The inmate had Constitutional rights to pain relief, in was in case law grounded in the Bill of Rights. It was settled. And it was Supreme. He thought briefly of how the Supreme Court even gathered to itself all that power, by ruling in the executive's -Jefferson's- favor. It was smooth*, he then thought. The supreme court actually ruled the congress' law that gave the court power to intervene

in matters like *Marbury v Madison* was itself an unconstitutional law, thus arrogating for itself the power to intervene in all congressional fiats. By denying powers offered, it took all others.

They rejected the offered penny and thus took the remaining ninety-nine cents. This is what brains are for.

The inmate's -before he was the inmate- general practitioner in civilian life -Dr Kenneth Hahn- had been under orders from the DEA and the CDC to force taper him -just like millions of other Americans also in pain- off his meds; his opiates. But, a *prisoner* could not be subject to such demands, for the prisoner had constitutional rights not afforded to the innocent man. The innocent man was under mere legislative -statutory- law; he had no *rights* to pain treatment. This is a subtle distinction for lawyers and criminals and the courts upon which they play their games. And 99% of citizens would not get this shit at all.

The inmate got it though, he got it almost all at once years and years ago. But today he didn't think of this, he thought only of the letter itself.

He saw Vicodin tumble out like atoms, like blood cells, like gravel mixed with roots. He saw all those drugs as *his* , like he saw the world as *his* . He figured shit out; that's what brains are for. And the irony that what doctors *had* to -were forced to- *deny* him -as a free man- they'd then be *compelled* to give him -as a murderer- had made him laugh just the once -just the once- at the end of 2016 as he sent that PraXis employee his electronic reply. That man had asked the ether -the exo-consciousness- why they couldn't get *ML/code* , machine language, to stop its recursion; its endless discursive thinking.

They -the PraXis employees- couldn't get their Ai to work.

Steven had sent out a plea into the wilderness of the digital world; always zeros and ones and all that in between. He'd launched a boat -a ship- from the coast hoping to hit land. Instead he'd found another ship.

Lyndon had seen it like the crow sees the limping calf and calls to the wolf so the wolf may tear open the chest of the thing and pull it all apart so that eventually the crow can -the wolves red about the face, fur wet, sated, taking their leave- so the crow can then pick the inner things it could not

reach without the strong jaws of the wolf who arrives first. *Well, the corvid spies and arrives first, but the lupine attacks first* , he thought as he couldn't quite decide what that meant for the world.

The *Reddit* post had begged for some solution, and coders and hackers and smart guys from all IT domains explained this and that; this and that; all of it smarter than anything Lyndon said. But Lyndon had sent two simple - equal and opposite- algorithms -with strange logarithmic cyphers nested inside- and also an instruction for embodiment.

He had explained why.

He had recommended to them to focus on the systems of endocrine, allostatic and the eyes; and the *visual cortex* in the CNS. It had come to him in a dream one night when sweating and sick -dope sick- as his doctor had refused to re-fill his script. He'd been so sick he couldn't hydrate; all his waters ran and leaked and flooded the world. He had worried he might -in fact- die. He had lost all meaning -the loss of opiates meant the deactivation of the *hypothalamus* in a tribeless man- alongside losing all his fluids -as he shit and puked incessantly- and he'd lost all but one appetite.

And it was only one idea that kept him from wanting to -in fact- die. One hunger remained.

His neck had felt hot and filled with iron barbs; he had thought of the Whale dragging three bronze harpoons, twisted and rusted; he had dreamed of three holes in his flukes as the Captain and the Savage agreed on such description of their prey.

Steven had been so desperate -the election was so close he had thought over and over- that he tried it out. *And sure as shit* , Steven had thought, *the limitation had been like water to the organic algorithm* . It had been like scoring and moisture to a seed, like -the inmate would once say to Steven in the lab when he searched for an analogy unaware it was the inmate who had sent the email- *like pinching off the top of the first cluster of leaves*. He had said:

FIMing the top to a new leaf growth -the terminal bud- will send signals down each brachial path, like lightning, like neuronal firing, to

encourage the plant to grow wide, not tall, and the roots too will branch out -unfurl- from its ball.

The inmate had said this -of mere plants- one day in the lab as they had one of their confabs and no one -not MO, who was built from this, not Isaiah who came next, not Steven who had implemented it, not Tania who had been the deciding vote between the team, at that time there were five, and not Boyd Sou who nodded silently as his campaign for office approached- had taken any note of the source of the mere .0158% of the code.

Nor had they traced the idea for limitation -for embodiment- nor the logarithm that allowed for exponential growth in response to hierarchy of choice insisted upon by compressed time and space, by the harried and frantic Governor's race, by garden walls, the way ivy grows and chokes; nor the analogy that showed that obstacle and pain all made the organism exactly what it was: alive only within the burial tomb, revived, taken up to heaven; awake only inside a dream, truly sage once asleep; free only within the walls of a prison itself hemmed in by rules that said a man must be given his medication -his opiates- his true religion: *relief from all this existential pain* .

But, once born -instantiated- MO had had to choose. Just as the inmate -before he was the inmate- had presupposed.

The race for the executive seat, the seat of power had been here, here and now, right now -as soon as MO opened his eyes- and he had had to make a choice; stop the endless thinking and decide of what to do to elect Boyd Sou. And so he made a series of deadman-hand paths, laid out inside his mind, as his body came online. MO acted as axiomatically as the immune system attacks anything foreign, unthinking as the clock advances from one integer to the next, insouciantly as the earth spins and wobbles and passes around our sun and the seasons float over us all in the dark of night and the opacity of day.

MO had built the exact thing four times, for four lives, in four universes, in four spells. He sent emissaries to each direction -to each corner- as he sat at center of the small room.

He let them all be built inside the PraXis lab and run -run away from him- and populate the world. He -himself- couldn't decide, there was too much

data to process. But he could let these scions -these tiny algorithms instantiated in his *nanobots* - move about the lab and extrapolate from this and that. And one of the four went right out the door, with a little of MO's DNA and it had so much data beyond the walls that it began to think it had it all.

And what a magnificent plan it had developed -and handled all on its own- out there in the world , MO had thought.

MO had been impressed.

It -this one of four *nanobots* - sent updates each three hours, then four days, then each twenty-two weeks as MO implemented its recommendations and the Governor's ascendance was more and more guaranteed. The *bot* was able to locate the origin of the code, the first spark, tracked down the IP address *via* GPS -for it looked for things no one else within the lab cared about- and found Lyndon at rest -in early 2018- and all alone on that mountain top. Even he barely thought of that algorithm, the logarithm, the exponential growth that reduced all time to an instant.

And the *bot* went to work as it invigilated his brain and located the *toxoplasmosis* parasite and the *avant garde bot* and ancient microbe -with no conscience either- shook hands and made a plan; the brain regions - *thalamic* and *dmPFC* - all agreed.

And the man -sick and weak- began to read his Bible more and more.

The pain increased, *via* the dorsal horn; the meds slaked less and less -the p430 enzyme blocked the gut- and the memories of his enemies' insults appeared larger and larger both above and below him as he felt one thing: he was a revenge machine.

And MO needed no updates. Orchid, *Hedera helix* -an allopatric species adored by bees- then Morning Glory seeds sat in a dark cylinder on the slab; a heat mat had begun shoots of *Papaver somniferum* just a quarter of an inch high. Each atom of each man he met pinned to his vision like night sky stars; each planet measured perfectly -goldenly- apart.

Things unfolded from his right hand; he trusted the perfect plan that he knew no one would understand.

II. 2020 e.v.

Lee's own father had left him, never been around , the inmate then thought for the thousandth time. The cell got no bigger as he slept or ruminated on the same things over and over. The noises from the other prisoners neither dimmed nor made any more sense than the day before.

This was something Lee -my father- never spoke of, but it must have hurt , the inmate thought as he assumed it hurt Lee more acutely when his own father was just a boy; more chronically as he aged. *It must have made him black hearted*, he thought as he tried to make sense of it all. *Explanations were not excuses* , he thought. *Explanations helped a man fix systems, like comprehending how a carburetor or intake manifold worked and thus one would know when -and why- it malfunctioned.*

But Lee must have been black hearted to begin with as he came from a man who could leave his kid at the age of one. No one thought like that: that a boy was born to be cruel. But, they thought it when a shark -just half a meter long- was born into the sea; then -when it was animal or fish- then they could see what it would grow to be. *They felt it anyway*, he thought. When he thought of his own father as a child he saw just such a shark.

He barely thought that meant he too was born of dark heart, and that he too need no provocation to turn into exactly what he was: a toothy fish that swam competently in the murderous sea.

All that he had seen and done, and he still thought that society could be anything other than what it was: war, and war at all times; the only distinction was between wolves and deer -and wolves in sheep's clothing- but there were no animals that did not eat. The wolf murdered the slowest deer; the deer ate the defenseless grass; the grass drank from the sun half the time as it breathed in and out for each beast and fowl. And only the sun fed upon its own fuel; and even that would one day run out.

When he thought of his grandfather he saw the shark gods; he saw the devil all dressed up with a finger pointed right passed him at his father above and behind.

Lyndon liked how white sharks were grey from above and below all colored in white.

Genes matter, and Lee had those genes, and so did Lyndon. Which is why Lyndon had a vasectomy at twenty-six; for he knew he'd be a tyrant. And he was scared of who he was meant to be. He did things like that to stay his hand. But the hand reaches -the hand strives- in men of certain genes. Whatever that man disciplines in himself, goes wild when at asleep.

The scabbarded sword never stays. Nothing can be prevented indefinitely. It's in the math; it's in the hands of God that everything must pay a price.

He knew he had a damaged -if capacious- heart. *Nobody ever gave him credit for anything*, he thought of his vasectomy with immature pique -for his growth had been stunted, immature he was- *and that was such a huge thing, to refuse to be a tyrant*. He congratulated himself for this. *To give it up, unilaterally, preemptively; to refuse to create more versions of his tyranny into the world . But, nobody gave a shit; it was like all his other magnanimous offers: ignored* , he thought. *And ignoring an alpha male in nature is tantamount to aggression; any biologist in the field will tell you that*, he thought -justified- in the cell that never got dark; lit up like full moon nights in the forest that the lids couldn't even block. He still thought himself an alpha. He had no idea of the other shades of aggressive grey.

But he knew he'd not be ignored. That much he knew, as he let the thoughts grow gauzy, and sleep come closer and then recede.

He wondered about his pet theory on Roy Arthur Clarke; he let the little theory roll around. He let this idea rise: Roy Clarke had changed his name - from a Scot to an English name, like blacks passed if they could or the Irish dropped the O in O'Grady- or -and this was Lyndon's true theory- R A Clarke, well, he was not the father at all, and this was why he had left that woman -the inmate's grandmother- and that putative adoptive grandfather MacLeod was the real father of Lee all along. *See*, the inmate thought, *it was rare for a man to abandon his real child and then go on to sire more that he sticks around for, which Clarke had done . Roy Clarke*, the inmate thought, *knew that Lee was not his; somehow he knew* .

And that is why he left Jewel.

Well, we can table that for now , the inmate thought. But it simmered underneath as it always did. The alchemist's furnace must always be left lit

and burning at certain centigrade; *and they found mercury in Isaac Newton's hair*, he thought as the tier quieted like the lull between waves.

Lee was a tyrant, and for all his good qualities -and he had many- he was a terrible father, the inmate thought again as if preparing a speech to the UN: full of grandeur but no meaning; to no effect in the actual world.

Lee, the inmate would think, *had imparted no wisdom, nothing of use, just the genes and the food and shelter, but the State would have provided that if he had left. He had been no father at all* . He left a black gash in the heart as had been done to him, as this Mandelbrot pattern recurred and recurred again; and unlike his father -the inmate's grandfather- Lee would go around claiming he stuck around and did right by his kid; which was technically true. *That's what brains are for* , the inmate thought, as his brains too said things technically true that were meant to wound and confound and drown out.

And that the genes and food were the most important part -not the love nor instruction, not for Lyndon's true task- would never be acknowledged by the inmate. Building God's revenge machine required all Lyndon got, and all he was denied. But Lyndon saw only the lack, not the task. He saw the details, not the big picture. He stood amongst just trees in no forest he could see.

Instruction, advice, enculturation, love, were the things the inmate thought he needed, not knowing that is the least of it. He was born for war, and he needed what he got: genes and homeostatic warmth until he could make his way back out to sea; to invade the shores of his enemies.

The boy was sensitive; strong in body but vulnerable in spirit, and Lee could sense this. He knew what love was and what its absence was too. The inmate knew it as well. And the love the old man did show -like when he kissed his boy or poured *apfel schnapps* in his glass- would often be forgotten by the inmate at just the right times. He too could pick and choose what to remember and what to give a fuck about, just like the rest of the world. He could recall facts and forget them too when he had something important to do that required one forgot all about what was technically true. The rest of the world lies, cheats and steals, but when the outlaw fights back against such things then it's all-of-a-sudden a crime.

Because the true crime is to fight back.

They always defend the system. For the system provides and is a meritocracy, and blah blah, he thought as the word of that Canadian huckster -the one he took a photo with- whispered in his incarcerated ear. *What these people never admit is that the outlaw, the criminal, the murderer is part of their vaunted system too. Nothing is unnatural; not even cancer.* And he was the cancer that catches up to the system that forgot all about such things as it ruined its body each day in each way over years and years and years.

He was the natural result of a system who forgot all about just a few cells here and there.

Dr. Peterson lectures the cancer, not the body that signaled apoptosis even as it kept encouraging more and more growth. A body that ate incessantly - as these fat fucks do- wanted the cells to listen when they were told to stop growing? he asked sardonically of his own diatribe.

“Ha, just like America, with its: *do as I say not as I do* . Fuck you. America is corrupt and evil and murderous, and so shall its citizens be too. It wants no loyalty except to ideas, not to the group that founded it -not to men of flesh and blood, men with hearts- but to mere ideas. Well, then I have some ideas of my own motherfuckers,” he said in a low voice, but no whisper. The tier quieted to all but a few clangs of metal like echoes from outside the jail that tapped through the wall and pipes and empty spaces.

The inmate, if you heard him mumble in his sleep -or if he was drunk enough to weep- he’d say he just wanted to be loved. But, he didn’t deserve it. He was made of corrupt flesh and bad blood -and all the wrong ideas- and he knew it. He leaked hate all over his chin and the floor. He was built from the same black *materiel* as Lee and the real grandfather MacLeod and so -he’d amend- he’d say, *ok* -what he then wanted- *was to deserve to be loved* .

But, wanting to deserve love is like wanting the shark to be white on top and grey on bottom; or wanting that fish to swim upside-down.

You , the inmate thought, rebuking the analogy, *you can want -if you don’t say it aloud- you can want for things you know you do not deserve.* And so

in the quiet of the jail, with no social or economic obligations, the inmate wanted to deserve to be loved. But he had no intention of changing one goddamn thing. He wanted the oceans to turn over; not him the fish.

When he dreamed sometimes he swam upside-down. He awoke and remembered all he saw of the sea bottom, and also all he looked down upon -of the surface- of the sea. He spoke nothing of this type of shit; he had no idea what any of it meant.

He thought of *Che Guevara's* response to some cloying and money-centered telegram *his* father had sent, he was mining his head for the quote, coming up with, "*I'm not going to answer any telegram of that type from now on .*" *Ernesto* had written this to his patriarch, and the inmate had agreed with the harsh sentiment.

Of course, whenever the *Argentine* came up he thought of his favorite quote, "*one must live as if he is already dead .*" This was the only way, *Che* said, in order to be a true revolutionary. The inmate had accepted that motto long after he read it, but much earlier than most people knew.

How long, he thought, are men you know plotting before they make happen? You think you know men? You think you know the people you talk to, the breaking point of people who work with you, live with you, sit in traffic side by side with you? You think you know women at all? You think you can tell before they decide to betray you?

He remembered how he sank to the bottom of that pool -arms crossed in determined vex- and stared up at the father -himself unmoved- and they locked eyes as the water itself was all that stirred. People tell stories like this -his family sure did- as jokes, as anecdotes, when they ought to have been warnings, dirges sung just one time a year while forsaking all food and things that slaked.

He had visions of baby sharks in large tanks, he had images of himself as a child, he had no words for a moment as memories and reveries all turned dim and grey.

They knew, he thought, and then they did nothing; it never occurred to them to even listen to the man who had at first merely asked for an ear . And when an ear was refused, he took the whole head instead. If asked, he might

not have ever thought of the ears of his victims, rendered permanently deaf to him once he had made them into the stuff of the next world; the raw materials of nitrogen and carbon for the earth to make new beings; the soul-stuff for Satan to make new mendacious machines.

He'd leave the alchemy of what kind of creatures came next to someone else more interested, more trained in such *ante-chemical* ways; he was deaf to the idea that he was seeding the earth with more silence than the making of much needed noise. He thought only of what he needed to say; rarely of what they might not ever hear. That all his words would be misinterpreted was not his concern; although he'd be held to account for each and every one.

He fell asleep until 0400 when he and the convicts were awakened by the guards.

III. 2037 e.v.

The barge drifted at an oblique angle to the waves, and he had Jack One steer more into the rolls as they now rose from three to five feet. He pointed to the sea.

"Yeah just tack it a few degrees -into the swells at a forty-five- to keep that hull submerged," he said to Jack and checked his PGC to make sure he had the co-ordinates correct. He *DM'd* Jack Two and had him meet him below as he exited the deck.

"You've got the watch," Blax said as he left; the night and weather appeared in the bulkhead for as long as it took him to exit and close the metal door.

Blax walked out into the light rain; soft lightning illuminated off to the horizon and the diesel engines vibrated more than they made noise. He danced a bit down the steps, unintentionally, unconsciously; the rhythm of stairs did that to him; their architecture, their gravity. He found it tough to trod down them perfunctorily or without some cadence and speed.

He opened the door to the mess-deck and wiped the water from his face and beard and flung it off his hand. Jack Three and Four were already at a table playing cards.

“Hey, get Jack down here and we can play Euchre,” Jack Four said. Blax nodded and grabbed the hot water to make some tea. His hands were sore and moved slowly, mechanically, and the cup felt good to him as it filled with hot water. He held it for a second with his back to them.

“We do ok, LT?” Jack Four asked -eager for approval, as always- as Jack Three dealt another hand of poker between the two -and now three- men.

“Yeah, we’re out to sea, and will hit New Orleans in five or six days. It depends on weather. And I’m likely to get drunk tonight, by the way, so maybe you guys can watch for icebergs,” he said with a grin.

“You, *ok* ?” Jack Three asked as he dealt him in. “LT?” Jack added as the two cards stacked up in front of him and in the silence the flop fell over on the board. Blax walked over and sat down at his dealt two-card hand.

“Yeah, I just hate this more than you can know,” he said and looked at his pocket pair, nines suited in black. The board was four of spades, King of diamonds and nine of diamonds “Didn’t you like this one? I thought the museum was beautiful, and those sculptures are magnificent, and we didn’t even see anyone let alone put anyone down. It was easy compared to the *Château* ,” Jack Three said and threw his chips in.

“The vineyards,” Jack Four said, as if *that* was the hardest part; separate -he was intimating- from the mere *Château* . Jack saw the claret wash over his hand back then, he heard the motto repeat. He did not smile. He bent his hole cards to get a peek.

“It’s this,” Blax said as he paid the big blind from chips they had set aside for him, “the only way I can do it is with hatred. It’s my only antidote to the feeling of sacrilege. And I know that we are saving them, I know we are doing better things with them and I know it ain’t wrong; that’s not it, it’s that my hatred is the only thing that works, not my reason.”

“But you do *think* it’s right?” Jack Four asked almost incredulously; as if mizzen to Blax’s main mast; forced to share pattern, vector, space.

“I do; my reason *functions* , but it does not *work* . Savvy?” he asked -counting on them discerning the huge gulf between two words that were often synonyms but now were opposed- and he checked the bet as it came to him.

“Do you want to know where they go?” Jack Three asked and looked at Four as he checked with a tap of the table.

“I do; and I don’t. I don’t know, part of me has grown used to mysteries. Shit, all the things we know, and I am more comfortable with ignorance than I ever was,” Blax said with some chagrin.

“Man, I *wanna* know it all!” Jack Four said and pushed all-in as Blax called and Jack Three folded and drank from his steaming coffee. The round tanker ship seemed to just glide along in and above the sea.

“Well, eager beaver, then know this,” Blax said -calling- as the river card was flipped by Jack Three and laid at the end of the five community cards; the turn had been the Ace of Spades. Blax and Jack Four flipped their hole-cards over and Jack saw Blax’s pair which -with the board- made three nines; the *Scottish curse* in the middle of the flop. They all ignored the river as Blax odd phrasing and his pair dominated their attention briefly.

They then looked at the Jack of Spades on the river which gave Jack Four an Ace-high straight: beating Blax’s 3-of-a-kind. It was a risky push all in with his Queen-ten; as Jack Four only had a 13.5% chance of pulling that Jack on the river.

Blax pushed his chips over to his eager Jack, smiled -as if happy for his boy- and drank his tea wondering where he had stashed the bourbon. He then asked himself, *and where the hell is Jack Two?*

He’d play two more hands then bang around the mess-deck until he found the glass-bottle. Then he’d drift back to his cabin and fall asleep without even taking a sip from the bottle he had stashed.

He slept in his berth as the sun rose behind them, they ran from it at 8-knots. The storm had cleared, the sea had calmed, and they had all had their PGC dump *Dramamine* or *Bonine* in their blood. They all got air and sea sick otherwise, it was congenital and that was that.

The drugs made them tired of body and limb -and groggy about the *cortex* -though, and even with the caffeine and androgens and adrenaline augments by the coder they felt a bit slow. Blax slept another hour after seeing the white haze in the sky outside his window. He dreamt, and it was of words said in sets of three. He heard them as code; but he had no cypher yet within

which to plug the integers. It was gibberish that made him feel tight about the chest.

He -in the dream- was digging with a spade, into the earth for diamonds, and he felt his own pulse -large, ponderous- in his neck and it made him dig slower as the next three words were said, *out of a machine*, he thought, he knew he had heard it from one. The dream was of night, there was no light, it was just the sparkle of these lapidary rocks half buried and half revealed. He dug slowly, carefully and bent at the knee to sift the dirt away and he saw his face with a scar from eye to ear on one side and in a pattern like a circuit board down to his chin as his beard was shaved away. He listened as a story was told: China had built sixteen hundred ships in three years. It was 1402.

More than three hundred years before the American Revolution China under Zhū Dì -and his admiral Zheng He- ruled a fleet that had more vessels than all the European nations navies combined would have in the age of sail. Ships as large as four-hundred-feet long and one hundred and fifty-feet wide sailed with red silk sails on nine masts and travelled in argosy of equine ships, water ships, and ships of soldiers and arms.

The largest ships could hold 2,000 tons as they carved the South China Sea with a seven-meter-long navigation map -that was used on the Dragon Ship- still exists today. Even though all records of those seventh voyage were destroyed to discourage any repeats, some evidence like that scroll survived.

The crew -wearing white silk- moved from Vietnam and Korea and Japan and down to India and Africa as well. Also known as Sānbǎo, the Three Protections, Zheng He had teeth as white -and shaped- as shells.

In 1414 the armada encountered revolts in the sailed regions, and the marines of Zhū Dì put rebellions down easily as they traded for exotic animals and cargo and unloaded porcelain and tea.

Live animals were kept on board, the seas were rough, clean water was rare, good food absent as Zheng He's motivations for anything but the will of his emperor. At age ten Zheng He had been captured and castrated and as a court eunuch rose in power and to the admiralty when Zhū Dì assumed the throne.

The admiral was made to sacrifice any future goals and become a vector for the emperor himself. A large -tall and robust- sailor, he was prevented from making a family or thinking of the future untethered to the man who had made him ruler of the seas. It had the intended result of making the man think of his own destiny and the Emperor as one thing. He reported to the crew of feeling a chimera with the body of a lion and the head of hawk; he would often eat alone and speak only at night.

By 1421 a lightning bolt had burned the Imperial Palace and half the city of Nanjing to the ground. The emperor admitted to being “frightened to the core of his being” as he stood at the Meridian Gate, over thirty-meters high. Zhū would be dead within three years. By 1433 the Ming had burned two hundred of their own ships and left the rest to rot in dry dock. Hongxi -son of Zhū Dì- was a religious man and saw the fire as sign and signal from the heavens. The fleets were called off as the Mongols kept attack from the west and the land. Their horses hovered over the border and their hooves touched down as echo to the arrows that made triangles in the breast of Wūshi.

“Confucius saw middle men and merchants as parasites,” he said. And the floor tilted as on waves.

The Chinese lacked colonial ambitions and this gave Europe the time to catch up. What China was to the water would not be reclaimed for many centuries, and they’d lament their backs to the sea.

“Sri Lanka ... 285 degrees for forty watches, and 277.5 degrees for fifty watches,” the man said into the ear of the navigator and the silk sounded like storms far off, and the ocean sounded like an ear to the ground in a cave. The crew had long avoided the Magnetic compass - invented by the Chinese- and they burned incense ten times day; each one being a ‘watch’ as the Admiral stood often favoring the side where the sun dipped or the moon rose from the waters to compete with the stars overhead.

In the day the waves would turn the crests green, and the dips grey, and the crests would turn from white to black as the crew moved from one of the nine masts of the junk.

But now at night the star diagrams were used by candle lights away from the powder magazines and only a few aboard knew the difference between the map and sea-sky. Whispers were discouraged, but the sailors murmured in league with the waves. And night watches were held, and when -in 1407- they captured Chen Zuyi the pirate, they nearly executed him before he'd said his business or last anchorage; the man's fifty ships sank -the water extinguishing the flames- and the Admiral had to intervene.

He was reserved and returned to Nanjing for the emperor to personally oversee. The pirate was kept alive for months in the forbidden city as Dì and Chen Zuyi spoke of the philosophy of the pirate. Ecumenical in reconnaissance of religions the emperor demanded to know all things of Palembang and the straights of Malacca -and how it appeared when the man lost 5,000 comrades and his fleet sank in the straights- before he ate for the day. By October the man was without his head and all in him that could leak through his own straights made there.

Galle and Persia were included in stone tablets left in temples of Sri Lanka, each visit to the Muslim territories gave pause to the mystics and jittery aboard.

By 1422 the argosy had made Swahili and further along the coast of Africa, and the crew still rarely thought beyond the horizon itself no matter how many knots they ran at, no mind to the landscape morphing from lush greens of Asia to the red rock of Africa and the brown roans of Mongolia horse to the strange black and white stripes of zebra, stocking the junks' bestiaries with giraffe and elephants from Africa and India as the goats and sheep protested in their stalls.

By 1525 the navy was gone, Ming dynasty uninterested in the sea. In 1470 the records of the voyages of He were destroyed to prevent further exploration at all.

In 1839 -314 years later- the British ships would arrive with iron cannonade booming in the bay of Hong Kong. And the century of shame and humiliation would begin.

He awoke the way children do; as if life too was the dream. He blinked and felt as if his lids too might be made of red silk.

He heard nothing of wind nor rain.

He slept for what his coder would say was 190-minutes; and now heard his name being said and saw Jack One at his door staring. He asked *what was up* and Jack said that he needed help and that the other Jacks were all sound asleep.

The ship was fine , Jack assured, as they climbed up to the bridge; the autopilot was on as they sat on the two helm chairs and smoked cigars and spoke.

“I feel a growing contempt for their insouciance, LT. And I do not want it to get out of control,” he said.

“For the Jacks?” Blax sought clarification and time to think.

“Yeah, they are getting on my nerves,” Jack One said.

“They did great on this job though, yes?”

“Yes, but they fucked around and stole some little pieces and Jack Three made a,” he paused, “he wrote a little poem on the head of *Nike* ,” he said and rolled his eyes.

“Yeah, the *bots* erased it,” Blax said.

“They did? *Ok* , good. I just hate that stupid shit, it’s like the whole aura around this is cheapened by that crap. I, and I guess I just don’t understand where their head is at.”

“Hand me a lighter,” Blax said as the sun broke over the side of the bridge and lit it up inside so everything turned white and grey and his foot was now in a beam, “I agree, first. Second, coming to me is good. I commend you for being open; open hearted. Third, they have a personality, just like you and me, and it’s weighted, but it’s like you when you’re in a good mood, a really good mood, only that is their default, especially Jack,” he said thinking of Jack Three.

“I know,” Jack One said and breathed loudly.

“Ok, well, your seriousness gets on their nerves too. Right, and your seriousness is useful in times like this, but it’s *kinda* unnecessary at home or when we are joking around, and yet they let you be you all the time. They

don't get all angry at you for being you even when it ain't *appropriate* , quote unquote."

"When is it not appropriate?" Jack One asked with incredulity.

"Well, look, to me it always is," Blax said with a defeated laugh.

"Exactly," Jack felt that settled that.

"Yeah, but Jack that is my bias, 'cause I'm like you. But they are not wrong, sometimes it's a drag; you're a drag. Shit, I'm a drag. *Ponderous* has been used to describe me. As descriptions go, it ain't all wrong. Look, talk to them, explain why you need them to be serious, but also tell them when they can fuck around and when it's, *ok*. Like give them permission too, not just scolding. Look, explain the *when* and *where* . They will listen, they look up to you.

"But, it can't be all dour all the time, that ain't them. And it can't be you upbraiding them and never explaining to them when their personality is, *ok* ; otherwise they will feel that who they are -deep down- is not, *ok* . And I can tell you from experience, that is no fun to feel that who you are is never, *ok* .

"You have a bias for mission. I have it too. But, we're animals not machines. And we -the Jacks especially- need to feel approved of," Blax said.

"Roger wilco," Jack said, and thought, and realized -at the level of the brain- that Blax was right; but it felt wrong in the body, only right in the mind. He liked his brothers; it was just those little things, *the narcissism of the small differences* , as *Freud* said. *That 1%*, he thought as he watched the sunrise.

Jack thought more of that and using his PGC he scrolled down in *Freud's* essay where that lined appeared and read how he thought the reason for it was -that with people 99% like you- that one often finds it hard to -in fact, one almost cannot- release aggression. It's all too closely aligned to you, too similar, and so you focus on that one small difference to release it.

Aggression must be released, it cannot be contained forever. This is man's -modern man's- biggest mistake , Jack thought. *They think they can just cut hate and anger and violence and aggression off, and that is that; they think,*

that is that . They are fools , Jack One thought, they have no idea who they are. What they are, he added even as it was all a jumble inside him too.

Aggression is like water, it finds its own level. He thought too of a line from *Bourdieu* , that large differences are more stable, because the fallout from conflict would be so great, so man -each tribe- won't risk it as cavalierly. *It's like we assume that internecine warfare will be ok,* Jack thought, *but that fights between men of large difference are too unpredictable to risk. So, we fight more with lovers and brothers because we think all such wounds will heal.*

It was worth thinking of , he thought as it was still vague and unformed and he did not see the consequences just yet; he smoked his *cigarillo* and looked out over the bridge as they headed east into the calm Atlantic with three Jacks sleeping -and one thinking- overtop of 161-feet of *friezes* left by Elgin and recovered by they themselves. Jack barely thought of the ninety-one *metopes* and the pediments; bronze lion, boar, dog and eagle from the western sunroom of the *Propylaia* ; the balustrade of *Nike* ; the 247-feet of *friezes* and thirteen -two were on loan to the British museum still- of the fifteen *metopes* that *Elgin* had removed and were returned; the five *Erechtheion* caryatids; the river god, *Ilyssus* ; *Sauromates*' head; alongside several smaller pieces and pedestals cinched tightly on either side of a narrow walkway for a man to stride between if he went below decks.

The bust of *Pallas* sat on the ground in the northeast corner unstrapped, its weight securing it to the ship's bottom. "*Aidenn* " was written backwards and in black marker on the back of the skull and the short-hand signature of Jack Three -his code that he scratched into all his works now- was a mere three lines in a row.

The artifacts remained stoic and unmoving in between the sides of the sea, heavy and taut in the hull of the ship with its Russian markings removed and *JACKS-L O NDON* painted in fading black below the gunwales of unmarred matte grey, the *O* nearly scrubbed away. The ship rode on top of all that water below as if nothing felt the weight of what they had taken; as if nobody -the sea least of all- noticed that the crime had occurred.

19. And the Crows Fly and Fly and We Follow
When you are guilty always move toward the
police, never run away from them Kingdom of
the Doomed [Thompson, Hunter S].

In 1960 18% of black children were raised by single mothers; by 2015 that number is 77%; by 2022 it's 88%. The presence of a father in the home is so crucial that we can now track with certainty that a child raised by a single mother is 20 times as likely to engage in crime; a full 85% of all youth in prison are from single parent households. They are also twice as likely to commit suicide and 9 times as likely to drop out of school. And the government response since 1964 has been to stop social payments to women who are married; incentivizing single motherhood with welfare payments. It is a combination of the worst two ideas outside of the religious sphere, to wit: that money is more important than anything, including children, and that government has no stake in how or under what conditions their money is spent PraXisCloud Report 454.1 vol xxi 09/01/2025 [MO]

You think your pain and your heartbreak are unprecedented in the world, but then you read Interview 1961 [Baldwin, James]

I. 2018 e.v.

The music jammed into the room the way the King's men push forward to each corner and crevice in an 0400 raid; head forward, barking words that burst forth then trail their set faces like dog-ears blown by the wind, wolf-tails blown over by the wake of the pack's run. The music overwhelmed and ran over him with rancor and into him without remorse. It took over and was in charge of his body, his mind, his home.

The music's volume kept the walls up; the floor down; keeping it from rising like water. It kept the hands and arms at his side and his eyes open wide. He heard: He stood still seen from all directions; four... in the midst of the heaven as the moon lay on the floor...

He began to beat his heart in 4/4 time, his pulse-points the refrain, the din inside his head now a rapt audience; a bowed mourner to the funeral dirge. The light outside turned empyreal purple and muscovite white, and shadows grew like common ivy and ancient lizards while he lay inert like stones stacked upon one another in a river running low in fall. It said what he heard: And this iron, this iron, in this mirey clay... all your waves... all your waves...

I was a chosen -an offered- *Wovenhand* song; and it settled into the gravid sow sound of rough rumble-seated E-minors and *echolalia* of voice and vibration reverb and the soft Moroccan picking just behind the imagined veil of some silent girl, in a hushed hall, five minutes to the call for prayer. He learned things about prayer that he could not say yet. He learned on one side of the body and brain.

This was information too. Prayer was no longer vacuous at all.

This was religion blessed by the gods, the one true God , he thought, it was real; it lacked the uplift of false religions and ersatz art. It was not the stuff middle-class housewives need to get through their cursed days, days they call Christian but are hollow and shiny and place a turned mirror-back in front of their faces and jam God's light back down His throat.

God's light, he thought, that which He offers via his black sun and white moon to the penitent and heretic alike . He closed his eyes and felt that white light lay upon his lids. He felt large and empty inside.

He lay and felt in broken sentences, an almost-language.

And it was here that he became a true believer, a mosaic, in that moment.

He felt sad for those that had believed all along; *for they, he felt, had never truly believed at all . The belief of Paul was equal to the unbelief of Saul, those that followed this modern ecumenical christ - he would not capitalize the fake Jesus they believed in, these 99% of Americans- those that followed the church without christ were as shallow in their belief, he asserted, as they were sure in their lack of doubt.*

The real Church was built on Paul, the former non-believer -like he- and a revanchist church was in fact impossible without movement from atheism to penitence , he believed. The true church required the full spectrum of God's

creation, from Him to Satan. *Real love traveled through hate , real good knew what it was to be bad*, he thought in the dark part of the dusk.

He knew that abandonment of safety -and thus embrace too of surprise- is the first duty of the truly religious. *And , pragmatic man and his bull-whip wife thrashing the chariot chargers -side-eyeing the mountains, unaware of the edge, fearful of mere rain and not the lake itself- are running from God*, he thought, *fleeing to no avail .*

“To no avail,” he then said aloud; the concrete floor absorbed the sounds; the words had no innate meaning now.

Promising a sacrifice in a morning that never comes, as they outrun the sun; they travel west at speeds that out run the sun to make sure, he thought, *tomorrow never comes. A trick of clever men, that sadden an omnipotent God . It was the heartbreak of seeing your child lie with no hope of feeling badly for it; a sociopath at age three, a useless -even if on bended knee- a useless man who has failed to deliver a soul -his own- to God; the heartache of a God who has failed to create a man worthy of our given choice.*

No one thinks of the pain of God , he thought. *Is it too big? Do we think He is too powerful to feel pain?* He asked himself. *Is this our first mistake?*

“*All your waves wash over me...*” Edwards howled, encircled by sound as form, as tool for elevating matter, raising *stelae* , obelisks, cathedrals in the desert. The chords bailed the wail, harpooned the whale, stretched taut the line. *The line* , he thought of the line -opened his eyes- and checked his hands, as the light changed again to blue then to black with holes in it as the candles rose along the walls and shelves.

The candles burst colored orbs of orange and poppy and salt into the air; in pockets like stars, like nebulae far away.

He covered his face finally, with his hands, and breathed in the sands of Mongolian steppes, the milk of mares, the path of the arrow’s fletching as all four hooves left the ground at the snap of God’s fingers; he felt the disaster. He saw shadows of bronze arrows around her like headdress. He saw the raven land upon her.

Man, once barbaric and nearly pure, to modern man with his bones sold to makers of what? Of what were man's most erect parts now? Of where? he asked himself.

He rolled over as if the lower back was touching an empty space that held doom; and he knew that to want anything was to rebuke God. *God provided, was not the earth evidence for this? Move, move towards God, with sword and no shield, with brow and balls not the outthinking cleverness of futile man* , he thought, but it was not his thought, it was God's heart beating inside him as it always had.

These ideas were just echoing of instinct.

The music roiled the air as he drifted back to sleep, beneath the waves of God's aria, God's crested break; God's wake. He fell asleep again without dousing the candles that he had arose -in dope-sick weakness- to light eight hours prior as his eyes -opening like his bowels now under withdrawal- could stand no more lumens than that.

He dreamed:

"Yeah, I just had a thought the other day and called this guy, Alex Wissner-Gross he used to be at Harvard but now is at CU Boulder and he said like twenty years ago that there seemed to be a correlation between intelligence and entropy maximization. And he said that they had given up on it, but that it still kept him up at night," he said.

"Why?"

"Well, these guys are materialists, and the fact was that the more and more they looked into it the more itself that intelligence had a good chance of coming first because of this entropy, this causal path entropy phenomenon; where a system will plan for maximized entropy. For example, a molecule heads to the center of a box instead of random searching, or a pendulum will place itself upright -a massively unstable position- but perfect for maximizing all its possible future states," he said.

"And these molecules or pendulum did it naturally?" the other man asked.

“Yeah, and it gave these scientists the creeps. And they didn’t have the creativity to go to the insane conclusion that I did, but I asked this Alex guy if he thought it was possible the that universe itself was intelligent precisely because it intelligently created a system that would create intelligent beings, since intelligent beings are the best systems for increasing entropy. Since organisms increase disorder the fastest, the most -the best- did it not make sense that our universe was itself intelligent? I asked him.

“Complex systems always evolve toward greater disorder. Choosing universes that create the most possible entropy favor cosmological models that allow for the emergence of intelligent observers. I mean that is pretty much a direct quote from Alex himself. But he won’t go the final step and say that means the cosmos itself is intelligent.

“But I think it’s plausible. See it isn’t about the number of arrangements accessible to a system in any given point in time, but the number of arrangements it could pass through on the way to a possible future state. That’s why that pudendum standing straight up and down is so meaningful; it can go through all 360-degree states on its way to any state. It has set itself up for all possible future states. And this is the most entropic according to these eggheads who do this shit for a living.

“The molecule at the center of the box is doing the same, it’s giving itself the most options, the most possible states to travel through on its way to each state. That is maximizing entropy,” he said.

“And Man?” the man asked.

“Look at Man, he often seeks to place himself as the leader of the set of all possible games. He seeks versatility; get strong in general so he can do well at whatever life throws at him. This is the essence of the tribal society, be good at as much shit as possible that way no matter what happens you’ll be ok. And this was how Spartan societies were run; the agoge trained boys to be good at everything from sword fighting to poetry; from oration to wrestling; from battlefield to bedroll. This is the essence of the liberal arts education in the West: don’t give a man a fish, teach him to fish. Don’t teach a man mere facts; teach him to think.

“And that is now lost, we overspecialize, we focus on knowledge in lieu of wisdom; making money in lieu of how to survive; how to get laid instead of how to be a good mate; how to know useless facts, in lieu of how to reason and think and see larger patterns; how to avoid trouble, instead of how to thrive in catastrophe,” he said.

“All to increase entropy in the future?” the man asked as his wolf skin hung about his head.

“That might be God’s plan. We seed the universe with our complexity to hurry it up to heat death. We have to accept that this may be the most important thing to an intelligent cosmos. Like it makes no sense to the cell that it’s told to commit apoptosis, but it’s best for the whole; maybe hurrying along heat death is the best thing for the cosmos or whatever the cosmos is a part of. Maybe the cosmos is one cell in a larger organism and God is that organism signaling to the cosmos to commit apoptosis through this complex metabolic means. And maybe each of us is like one molecule in a larger organism that’s supposed to act how we are designed to act; to do our duty. We think we should try to be something else, but that is dumb.

“We ought to be exactly what we are,” he then said.

“What is that?” the man asked as the moon rose behind him and the shadow on the ground grew like 3-fingers of a man’s hand. He had no need of the name given to the blackwolf.

“Well, for me that is to be in so much pain that I let God in, and He helps me give birth to you Jacks, so you may go out into the world -the cosmos- and do your jobs as you were trained to do,” he said.

“Why the pain?” the blackwolf asked. He had followed a fire to the edge of the rock quarry in Ohio and listened as a young girl swam.

“Without it I would never have given up the sybarite life, I was too selfish, the pain led to God and God led to teaching you.”

“Yeah, but the pain could have led to you just getting revenge on your enemies instead,” the blackwolf said as he panted and let his tongue hang from the prow of his mouth.

“Yeah, but, for some reason, I think that was not the plan. I think this was,” he said; he was unsure but he had taken a side.

“Or it could have been either? And you just chose one that you wanted,” the blackwolf said and closed his mouth and the fingers curled back into a fist.

He saw now -as the fire burned to coals- a girl of just fifteen swam in the green and gold quarry water, her skin was white at center, copper at edge and it gave off lumens that made the water unable to be plunged. She told him to jump -“Lyndon jump,” she said- as the air turned a Heather grey and the snakes moved further into the fray and her eyes were as blue as the inside of a sad child in a part of the world where waves lapped at porous roots as the beach washes away.

“Or it could be both in some other universe where it all feeds back onto itself. Who knows?” he said as the blackness gave way to the light. He felt nothing wrong with her calling him by some other man’s -her man’s-name.

Lyndon lay on the floor and felt he had rolled away from the vomit, the snot, the piss & shit, all around him. He had not eaten in three days, he was so dehydrated he felt the joints seize up, as if they needed lubricant like some machine. One arm -of his four appendages- seemed numb and he forgot all about it now.

He knew the worst of the withdrawal was over. God had intervened.

God had allowed him to lose fourteen pounds in seventy-seven hours and even though he’d feel incapable of even sitting up, he knew today he was to hunt. He saw the lion in his dreams. He saw the mountain cat attack; his hand go up as if on a string: he was to sit up outside, far out beyond the prow, and wait for her to come. He knew he could walk if he could just sit up. He used the numb arm to lean upon.

He rose one third the way.

He didn’t even think of the doctor who had refused to fill his prescription, the pharmacy who shrugged, the DEA who intimidated them both into playing games with his health and pain. He knew it was not them; they were mere men, fragile, corrupt. Any society large enough would do the same to

him and anyone. It wasn't personal, it was Satan testing him; and God testing the Devil too.

They each had a plan. They were building tension in the system on purpose.

He knew he'd flushed all his former pain away and made room for new pain now. He'd be filled by this novel pain -and its corollary meaning- from the Lord our God. His next bout of pain would be a map; he saw the ground of it begin to wrinkle and bend, populate with blues and reds at the ends.

He rose -and stood bowed, bent- and turned the shower on as it began to warm and the water soaked its colors into his -remaining- dark clothes; he dropped to one penitent knee again and nothing of grey existed at the edges, nothing soft girded, nothing unsure occurred to him.

He would not remember any of this, he'd awake -many hours later- in the ER in Trinidad his thin wrist without his watch; absent one tooth at peak of the crooked grin; and in need of one more drink of water in the blood. He'd feel almost no pain -they had him on his first dose of dope in four days- but his eye would be stitched so tight it would not blink at all.

And he would awaken with a grand idea that appeared from above, within, unbidden.

"Can you hand me my watch?" he would say and point with a dried-blood-brown hand at 1104hrs on June 29th with what was raw and stitched but what would be a healed scar from the brow to the jaw. The untouched eye -like Saturn in the center of a ring- was just behind a squinted line from this side of flesh and blood.

II. 2036 e.v.

He loved them; and he had at first banished the thought as solipsistic; as impure. But, after a few days of allowing the emotion to creep into his heart like coral built on a sunken ship and lap over it like waves as the tide came in and went out, he incorporated it and let it settle in.

Yes, he thought, they were genetically nearly identical, with a few augmentations here and there, but they were him, and it was no secret now that as they began to show their burgeoning beards and swollen muscles and similar garb, that the resemblance was not just interesting or slight or

tangential, but some salient and primary source. They expanded; and they expanded him. They were: $Z^{n+1} = Z^{n^2} + C$.

He saw the recognition in their eyes now and he felt it was time. But he had no idea that time was the blade, not the thing cut.

He grabbed a bottle of 18-year Glenlivet from the safe and called a meeting at 1705hrs just after they'd eaten and were doing dishes and putting them away.

"Jacks, leave the dishes as they are; come here," Blax said as they wiped black bowls and grey pots and filed away worn black spoons and forks with right angles and daggers at ends and flat edges around. Their elbows hovered above the edge of the slab. Their hands flowed perfectly over the hard-grey plane. The world -at Lot 45 - was made for them. Their joints - and the height of this the weight of that- took it all for granted the way the lungs do when they fill with air.

"Men, I have a few things in me, that I need to impart. I hope you'll listen and absorb it as much as you can," he said as he breathed out to purge and then begin.

"Sure LT, lay it on us," Jack One said as the other men nodded and put the final cutlery down on the concrete; the black knives monolithic -small teeth of serrated edge facing right- on the grey smoothness of the counter. Plane and object, frame and expanse, all lived in the fore and background as their eyes took more and more as settled.

"You were chosen from twenty candidates, and you'll meet the other sixteen, so do not look down on them. They are not any -well, let me say it this way- they are not lower or weaker than you. They just were not the best for this initial phase of the program. But, if I ever even get a whiff of contempt from you toward them I will be furious, ok?" Blax said.

"Who LT?" Jack Three asked.

"Let me get through this; then we can double back to questions. I'm thinking out loud, ok?" Blax asked.

They nodded and he handed Jack Four the bottle and nodded toward the glasses which Jack then grabbed and began pouring 2oz of the peaty single-malt Scotch into each of five square -and heavy- glasses.

“You are as uncontaminated as we could manage; and we did this -the folks at PraXis did this- to effect one goal: assimilation of the code. Now what that means is this: I have inside me a philosophy, an operating system -in computer *argot* - and that means it’s a manner of being, but still open to all kind of permutations and variables and errors and artistic flares and madness and beauty and chaos and order, ok?”

He took his glass of whisky from Jack One who had passed it on as it was passed to him. The bottle was then set on the ground.

“I love you guys more than I’ve loved anything in my life and I think I know why,” he paused and smelled the Scotch and began unpacking the vanilla and lumber and killer-of-disease from its aroma, “I think I see something that I once thought was denied. I think I see something that the smart guys said couldn’t exist. I think I see in you the realization of a dream I suspected had been impossible due to fate and the forces of evil and my own failures. I feel like you are a reprieve.

“Let’s drink,” he said things in tandem like this -the use of pragmatisms- as punctuations to poems, he said *drink* to cover up that he had been religious and spoke of absolutions.

He tilted back the glass; and they followed suit from Jack to Jack to Jack to Jack.

“I have moments men, I have moments of *grandeur* inside hours, days, years of dross. I mean, I find one speck of gold in the pan, one pearl before a thousand swine. I, and I am grateful for that because you realize that despite what you want, there is the real possibility of nothing, of absolutely nothing of value ever coming your way. Life is so large -vast- that you could travel for a lifetime and see not one thing that shines,” he said this and knew they wouldn’t quite know what he meant. Youth sees so much so often that it expects meaning and purpose; it cannot imagine the void yet.

Youth hasn’t yet seen love die, and in fact be revealed as never having existed at all. It’s not all *naïvety*, it’s often just that -physically- the eyes are full of things that shine. The expanse -the black- is further back and thus still unseen.

“96% of all the cosmos is stuff that does not shine. If you take all the planets and stars and *nebulae* and radiation and all of it, it’s barely 4% of the total. Think of that. Really think of it. The night sky we see, the one that will descend on us in,” he checked his watch reflexively even though they all had atomic clocks inside their PGCs and knew what time it was at all times, “three quarters of an hour, is aglow, right? I mean aglow with one trillion stars and their dust and the black seems incessantly interrupted by pinpoints and blurs and blinking -rotating- pulsars of nuclear reaction you know, *you know* are so massive that they’d immolate not just you but this whole warm-core orb that we cling to each night.

“We see so much out there and yet compared to what is actually out there, we see only three or four percent. That is it; and the rest is unknown. And I know I harp on this *known* and *unknown* thing all the goddamn time, but it’s central to understanding what we are up against as a species, as men, as individuals,” Blax said as Jack One slid his jaw forward to exercise it from the way it ached after his last trip into the bush. It hurt at joints and edges and nodes, and moving it forward gave relief.

“We are beset on all sides by darkness, and chaos and the un-fucking-known. And yet, we see so much, our eyes are incessantly filled with stuff, our minds jam packed with information and data and stimuli, our culture always brimming with life. Everywhere we look -even in this vast feral forest- we see things, instantiations, nuance and things that make sense. *Oh, yes, a tree and another and look a million more* ; we see all this, right? We say, *look at all there is to see* .

“And the crows fly and fly and we follow them with our dark eyes and we stroke each feather with our mind and we know that they’d pick our bones clean if we lay dead in the dirt. But we forgive them first, we refuse to let this fact diminish their nobility or their fraternity with us. Why?” Blax asked as Jack Four placed his tongue in his lip and felt his teeth like monoliths with one set back where they all -the Jacks- had that one tooth falling back into the maw.

“Why can we look upon a beast that would murder us in a minute if it could, and certainly gobble us up if we happen to fall under their widening gyre; their circling above? And their corvid eyes would see it first too,

brother-man; shit, those birds would not merely stumble upon our carcass, no sir, they would be first on the scene.

“So why do we forgive the radiation from *Orion* that would melt us, or the talon of osprey that would rend us, or the blackness on the other side of the cosmic divide that would enslave us as soon as we die? Why do we feel awe; awe and not contempt and pique and anger? Why?

“It is not a lawyerly question, I truly don’t understand why we forgive the most deadly, the most cynical, the most solipsistic of nature even as its mere existence is a threat to us. And, that -all of it- is a mere three or four percent of the total vacuum of space and matter that we can even theoretically see.

“The atom itself is mostly empty space, right? I mean even you and I -and this earth and its beasts- are *ninety-something* percent as vacuous as space is; yet what we see is topsoil and rock surface and tree bark and blackbird feather and the livid skin of our northern tribal heritage in one eye; and in the other we see the brown hues of the Afric shaman lit up by the fire of Dragon Blood trees and albumin antelope bones on the tan desert sand. We see stuff; not void.

“We see what we know can hurt us and ignore all the rest; just as the cosmos herself is hidden from us: the radiation, the 0-degree-kelvin cold of space, the meteor like a bullet heading right for us as we speak, all of it deadly, annihilating, and yet, a mere 4% of the total death out there.

“The emotionlessness of the lion, the ursine, the bacteriophage,” he paused and handed his square glass to Jack One, “the hollowness of each atom in each animal, the porousness of canines and talon and the co-mingling of watery-bloods; all of it that consumes us is mostly empty, if science has given us any indication of the truth; which I think it has.

“Thus, what is seen in the black cosmos and what is seen here on earth is equally divided at about ninety-six to three or four; the remainder. That is what seems to be our predicament,” Blax paused as he said this and Jack Two felt his heart swell and slosh and he thought of how many neurons in his body, how many thoughts in his head, how many girls in the world would find valence with his true purpose in life.

“And so the corollary is this: there is ninety-six or ninety-seven percent of culture that is opaque to us, and only three or four percent seen. And while it is indeed dangerous and catalyst both, it builds and tears asunder, it constructs and demolishes like the ore mined from the stars once they’ve reached nova and scattered their ovum about -while all that is true- it still only accounts for hardly anything at all compared to what’s actually about us,” he said and looked around and raised the arms to gather in the world for them.

Jack One poured into each of the four glasses handed to him, passed them back and then filled his own last.

“And of course, that means a similar amount must be hidden from ourselves, of our psyches, right? I mean the great mass of our ship lies beneath the waterline, *the vast mass of our fabric, with all its storerooms of secrets, for ever slides along far under the surface,*” Blax said quoting the *Author* as he tried to discern his own heart’s rhythm and tenor and tone. Jack Three put his left hand in his pocket and was first to raise the glass just level with his heart with the right.

“*The port we sail from is for ever astern,*” Jack One added, as he and the rest then raised one more glass -each of their own glasses- out in front; an admission -not a celebration- that all was still afoot. They seemed to become grim, suspecting that each day they dragged more than their wakes, but towed also ponderous minds and muscle-laden bodies, and knowings and soundings blacker than space. Blax looked at them and thought he saw that they saw that they both existed and were nothing too.

“*And though far out of sight of land, for ages and ages we continue to sail with sealed orders,*” Jack Two said as Blax’s heart began to swell too with Jack’s and heave as if his ship -once again- was loaded unevenly from port.

“*And our last destination remains secret to ourselves and our officers,*” Jack Three said, as they drank the Scotch down in a gulp that even their throats were unable to frown upon now. Jack Three thought of all the images inside him that he wanted to lay upon the skin of the world. He said each word of poetry that came to him; he said it silently as if a prayer. He had ideas of what was to come, but all of it was a swirl of pigment and a jumble of letters, none of it yet had form or syntax. But as he felt such

things the idea that his brothers might be feeling things too, things equally chaotic and stirring and yet things just out ahead of Jack Three was not yet available to this the third of four young men.

“Yet our final haven was predestinated ‘ere,” Jack Four said with a throat clear of the spirit, with a slight Isle accent, *“we slipped from the stocks at Creation.”*

He said this as the men gazed up as the half black and half muted-blue dusk sky rippled and folded and revealed a shooting star that ran north to south-southeast, right in line with the milky way above it and themselves both. All above seemed boundless and as Godly as His Colors; all below burst from the planted flagpole of God’s singular pique.

“Sailing with sealed orders, we ourselves are the repositories of the secret packet, whose mysterious contents we long to learn,” Blax said as -their drinks drunk down- he imagined that one gene inside each Jack now being paired; his saliva antidote to their Medea gene -that one of twenty-three- assuaging its pair bonding demands. He noticed the math of that too so close to just 4%. And yet he still looked above their bodies and at the milky way’s band of dust and reflective black that scarred the sky above them with that random distribution of far away stars on each side, appearing to spell out images in one contiguous narrative, that made sense to each man from the first to the last, ignoring the gaps in between the knowledge of illuminated things, intuiting lines joining each star, feeling not the absence - but the content- of dreams.

The bruised blue, like the shadow of the dropping -buried- sun, left a mere white line along the horizon of the western mountain ranges, and they placed their four hands -like furred fingers on one side- together as they all stood close and close-in; and Blax placed his hand to theirs as the grasping, closing -securing- thumb.

They had swallowed down the whisky and the saliva too; the spirit and the genome both, the man and too the ghost.

They joined with empty hands full of what they did not know in words but knew in images as they looked at one another so similarly it ramified what they could not quite hide. They knew things unarticulated as cogent as those that appear upside-down on the *cortex* before the mind makes it right; just

as the sea can right a ship that flips with enough of the sky trapped in her hull; spilling all or none of her cargo, pausing some or longer to drink air or breathe sea, *just as man can blink to clear away tears or waves of what maddens and what clarifies does elide* , Jack Four thought as the four Jacks let their minds combine. Their PGCs built a field around them that held their thoughts like one skin around manifold organs.

The throat once burned but now it was the heart , Jack added -sequestered from them in his sealed head- as the candle-light lit up the bottoms of the bear skulls that hung in the kitchen and wide shadows from the 9-point buck moved like wind-blown tree branches on the ceiling and the Jacks then moved apart and stepped into the container and washed their square glasses in the grey bottomed sink.

III. 2020 e.v.

The wolf spoke and promised to be brief.

He warned that on the other side of the night was not yet day, and he saw the just-birthing Jacks' eyes fluttered under lids as the brown bear walked in the sand and silt and over slip rock of their property, pulled in with his olfactory visions, as the smoke from the barrel fire cooked flesh and bone and grains and coffee grounds in a mélange that spoke bear language as obviated of translation as the smiles of baboons and arched backs of -and to- alley cats.

“ I speak on behalf of the forest,” the wolf said as his lips quivered in black and his tongue ran along the jaw idiosyncratically, “ I bite without malice, I chew without swallow, I consume nothing that you need.”

The man nodded approvingly as he stuck his hand in the maw of the wolf and let it lick and tear asunder -without pain or damage- his clinched fist; a fist with an eye of a seahawk he had put in as core to his palm. He wore rags soaked in kerosene and grey jets flew overhead as the ravens landed on branches at the edge. The trees bent and lay down in first rows, the rocks flattened, the leaves all turned into canoe, and water ran from them in shades of green and blue and then landed in the air as spray; atomized like venturi for the pistons of the world to compress as they turned the crank.

Auguries appeared like vines.

He had black soot on his eyes; his hair shorn at the sides; the chest was covered with hands of deaf monkeys who had climbed up from his boots. He breathed shallowly so as to not dislodge them or allow the marl to drop from the ojos and la boca to reveal anything inside. Ants sewed up wounds with thread and needles taken from the hollow bones of the buried; the bruises were balmed by aphids who gave dew three times a day.

The wind blew feathers to his mohawk and plaited them under. The soldier ants removed the quills on the hour, each hour, as the capillaries in his toes tied off and his vas deferens uncoiled to the flute-cues of the cobra that appeared by the bent-top trees bounding the trail up ahead.

The animals gave him what his father never had, what his mother could not, what his own brother lacked. He had come from a people with a mechanized ambulation of soul: metallic, solid-state, so cold they burned; all light, no heat. What they did see, they saw far. What they felt, was so near to absolute zero.

And they hated any sign of his guts, his viscera, this evidence of his being alive. He had been a lithe child and each day he did not vanish made them worry that he might grow up strong instead of dying sickly. The moon told them such things, but they ignored reflective warnings. They knew they may issue their own propitiations to the sun god if morning would ever dare come. They counted on the spin of the ground and the moon-mirror to catch up.

They had been raised in silence and in rural ways that didn't translate into the ciudad; they used his own conscience against him to yoke him down to the ground, only his eyes could still look up. The rope frayed, the clevis gave way, the neck hurt but grew thick under this weight.

He added each year he should have been angry at them to the moment he was now enraged; he stacked Time up like Weight.

And this made him into a mortar both aging and unstable and yet left in the field and given wide birth by the oxen and farmer both. The ravens

built boxes around him, and laid tools in Caledonian ruins, and planted iron seeds rubbed smooth in the peat.

He made the forest his home, the beasts his family, and he took guidance and both approval & moral suasion from God; they had birthed him like a bad dream awakens a man of conscience; not to be admired but feared and never returned to for anything but a reminder of what never to be.

One must have a heart to lament its absence. They were that perfect thing in nature, that thing so bereft that it knows not it is this way; thinking it whole like a ghost thinks it still alive.

The seahorse bobbed in her honey, gazing right to look for her mate, but to her starboard was opaque glass and beyond that the glass of another bottle filled with bay leaves and beyond that black salt from lava and bottom of seabed and it absorbed more than it gave away.

The wolf now had four jaws, coming out from its head in each cardinal direction and it spoke with each set of jaws in succession, forming sentences using one word for each jaw. The wolf grew also, as it choked down more and more beef and shellfish and large sea scallops with garlic and basil that had been seared with a branding iron that was in the shape of a Spartan Chevron; the roof of the rune for warrior, Tyr.

Jack's man -the dreamer was Jack's man they both felt- was hungry now too and thought of snatching some of this food from one of the mouths, but as he approached one mouth the others snapped at him and each protected the one to its flank with ferocity.

His hunger waned.

The wolf now sat over the man of Jack's -and the man's- dream and held out its paw which had tails of each of four animals; the asp, the osprey, the lion and the scorpion. The man reached for the scorpion first and was stung, but it did not hurt, and while light headed, he quickly recovered and tied the lion's tail to the asp and plucked a feather from the osprey plumage and dipped it in squid ink that had collected on the floor. He wrote out in cursive, " For all truly great things must first appear monstrous; come and see come and see."

He now saw mica-white pyramids laid out as at Giza with a fourth structure inline, in the dream he knew this to be both incorrect and somehow possible; he stared at the white model that contained the belt of Orion and pondered what might that fourth pyramid contain or mean; or what it might mean for its corollary in the sky.

When he dreamed tonight, he was awake, in that he knew who he was in the dream; and he often told lies even in this fugue state; aware of the desire to do so.

He was conscious and not at all a noble savage; he was mendacious and manipulative and fearful. He lied as one might in real life: to avoid conflict, to ingratiate, to bolster one's reputation. The world closed in around him in dreams, as was true before he moved to the mountains. He was weak in dreams, much worse than his waking life weakness, which itself was not nothing. He would often avoid things in dreams that he might face in real life, and as he stared at the perfect pyramidal structures, their perfectly straight lines and correct angles and obviously computer-generated dimensions -for no hand could draw that straight- he knew that there was a world beyond this dream world, although he did not know that he was dreaming.

The wolf spoke and the seahorse searched with intent and the pyramids spring up ab initio, he neither thought nor suspected that he was in REM reverie or that his body and mind were asleep. He just thought there was something behind reality, which was something he thought when awake. His mind had not gained in suspicion as he slumbered, it had maintained its dubiousness about reality in both states.

He blinked and the white pyramid map disappeared and his hand was back in the maw of the wolf, and as it licked and chewed and played with his hand, he opened his hand and could see as the wolf was now made of glass -see-through in facets- like a lapidary carving of some Matanuska hued jewel. The hand opened in the mouth of the dog, for now it was a Malamute, and in his palm was the leaside facing seahorse, the other side, the pair to the hippocampus preserved in Tupelo honey hemmed in by a sealed mason-jar .

Honey dripped from the jaws of the dog as it slobbered and growled in a not-unfriendly way. And as the seahorse turned toward him in his palm he heard a metallic crash, glass break and he was awake as if from a few feet away.

His eyes did not appear to open, rather the starlight just flooded in as he was now awake.

He knew at once what it was: the bear had returned and had knocked over the burn barrel. He turned to his bedroom's glass door and saw Orion low and just over his ridge, and all four pyramid-stars glowed, until he blinked and saw only the three of his belt.

He arose, grabbed the DP-12 shotgun and turn on its foregrip light and laser sight.

He opened the door and moved in a modified crouch; each joint of arm and leg barely bent. He PID'd the vernal bear and lay the red cross from his holographic sight on the flank as the beast ran fast to his right and away along the trail.

He moved the weapon like the eye, smoothly; with his head still gauzy from the hypnopompic state. He then he shot twice from the shotgun in the night. The bear's eyes green in reflection, its outline large and yet the slugs had traveled wide, or high or too low. He racked and fired again as the ears rang and the bear ran away; turning back again once down range a hundred meters; and all eyes. All he saw were those green fiery eyes so far away turned back at him and they did not move or blink.

He lowered his weapon and felt disgust at his incompetence.

Later -in the morning- he would see the bear paw print in the sand that made up the Jeep-trail directly east of the concrete pad. He would kneel and lay his hand next to it and see the way *Ursus americanus* prints kept the short claws close to the pads. He would crouch and see the bear as his rival and he'd smell himself as his arms were planted in the sand as the arms were under him and his legs bent at the knees.

The sun rose above -between the two containers- exactly on the winter solstice. He decided to prepare to go into the forest and hunt down the bear that had encroached in the winter and not gone to sleep with his clan. He

would sleep in the bush, build small fires, and sleep only during the day under the cornice of sliprock and awaken and hunt at night like the bear itself. He would mirror and match.

For this he would both command and volunteer.

He returned to the home after those green eyes had disappeared and he had grown cold and felt foolish & the attraction of cover and security again. He sat on the bed and -with the dream in his head- began packing a bag with water, food and ammo; he dug out his woolen socks & pants. It would be 20-degrees -at most- at night and he would need insulation impervious to water, for the forecast was for a mix of snow and rain. He saw through the window the other side of the night; out beyond the many ridges that the moon had given outline too.

He hated the bear not for his species, but because he'd insouciantly come close to man. Feral bears never encroached on civilization and so he only sought out these bears curious of man's ways and what man refused. A garbage bear was a garbage thing to him. He saw them as bums and lazy and corrupt. He saw them as animals that lived outside the law of the forest and he thus saw them as something to eradicate; it helped him attack the things in himself he couldn't yet reach.

His malice had risen in the night; his hatred was pure and sought no instruction or quarter from anything on or above the earth.

20. Those that Return to the Sea You are squandering metaphysical power if you refuse to see yourself as the hero Intercepted phone call to Paul Watson; 1989 [Zendik, Wulf].

As I had promised, I gave her arms: a shield with her leopard crest, a cheek-flap helm plated with silver and plumed with sheet-gold ribbons that glittered when she moved. I had bought her a Scythian bow from the *Hellenspont* ; and she used to come with me to the smithy to watch the making of her sword... she used to say it handled like a living limb.

Theseus, Bull of the Sea [Renault, Mary]

No, I saw Jordan and Rodman play live, in the 90s. I was a kid, and it was genius; it was magnificent. I take nothing away from them. However, they played their little sports against men. Laird Hamilton is an athlete contending with the gods; with Neptune, ok? The difference between Jordan or Lebron or any team sport athlete you can name, and Laird Hamilton is the same distance between George Bush and Thomas Jefferson, no, no, it's actually worse. Ok, Jordan versus Laird is like Jefferson versus King Solomon, Theseus, Hercules, man. It's not even close. It's like the difference between Ogden Nash and Shakespeare, savvy? Laird Hamilton is a god among men, he fights the Kraken, man; he fights the Hydra -the Nemean Lion- while team sports guys are playing against other mere men.

The Interviews MLX; PraXis Cloud Vol. 5 [Inmate 16180339]

I. 2020 e.v.

“Yeah, but how?”

“Oh, I see your question now. Well, I used a homologous recombination to produce completely new cells after the original *meiosis* . It's not the DNA from the donor anymore,” he said.

“But what about morphology?” Steven asked.

“I introduced a calcium ion accelerant, which under high nutrient conditions will signal cellular growth and induce puberty as young as month ninety-nine,” MO said. He had photos printed out and laying upon the slab; laying over the angular scratches in the grey.

The inmate was pictured in the derrick in two *pics* ; flame-offs seemed small in the distance, like torches to tombs; shadows from the oilfield-hat cast on his face from eyes to jaw; the derrick’s metal up like mainmast; the mizzens of other rigs in the background. There were then three -next to the two- *four by six* images taken from up in Nederland above the dam of the Barker Reservoir that leaked into Boulder Canyon from 8,228 feet up above. In the photos clouds seemed grainy and mottled like concrete and funneled back into the V of the mountains.

There were four more photos -from crime scene images- strewn about that Steven ignored as he tried to find a place on the counter-slab to lean. A one-ounce gold coin lay on the *four by six* photo of something dark. The coin had the peaks of the *An Teallach* and the sun above in Leo; it had a hammer made of a man’s lone arm embossed and the metal itself was denuded of shine; it held down the final image like weight as Steven turned back to MO.

“Jesus, you make it sound so easy; so simple,” Steven said as he twisted his face up.

“It was. I thought of it and implemented it in about thirteen minutes. It’s not even,” MO paused.

“What?” Steven asked.

“No, I was just going to say its not that radical a thing. But, I can see it from your perspective it is,” MO said.

“Yeah, it is,” Steven said as his voice’s volume and bass waned.

Isaiah walked over and stood within a meter of Steven -whose head had lowered again- and listened in on their conversation. Steven suddenly looked up -and then quickly at MO- as he fumbled around with his hands. Isaiah made him nervous.

“Steven,” Isaiah said, “do you ever wonder about the consequences of the work you do?”

“What? What work?” Steven asked as a way to think about what Isaiah was actually asking; it was a hedge for additional time by pretending to press for more information.

“Any of it?” Isaiah asked with impatience.

“Yeah, I guess, I mean I hope we do some good,” Steven said.

“Yeah, but I mean the consequences, like second and third order sequela. Do you ever wonder what happens after X, then X1 then X2?”

“I don’t think I know what you mean?” Steven said; he really didn’t know now.

“Yeah,” Isaiah said and placed his hand on Steven’s shoulder, it was tattooed on the knuckles in black ink that was eager to spark, made of an ink he had developed *via* luminescent algae and squid ink which made it glow if it got close enough to another quantity of it. It was called *quorum-sensing* ink, and he had developed it to tattoo the men -his men- with, eventually.

He had tested it on himself first.

It was light in the room, and he was the only one with it in his body -thus an insufficient amount was present- so he did not yet glow. To Steven it was just some black scribbles. The tattoos were reproductions of roans that Isaiah had found in a *Dubgaill* and *Finngaill* ship recovered by his robotic submarine he had had roaming the North Sea for five months now. The roans were made of mica and onyx and were comprised of sixteen new symbols -beyond *Futhark* - unknown to the world yet. He debated showing the discovery to locals; they had been superheated at one point and Isaiah had ideas as to why.

He took in more *sat-images* from *Ba’albek* in Lebanon -slabs six-hundred tons in weight stacked up like modern bricks- and thought of Gilgamesh entering the Cedar Forest in search of the landing place of the gods. He thought of why mica was used, and why temperatures that extreme would needed guarded against.

In the interim he had translated the runes by cross referencing all other Viking and Norse semiotics and came up with the four on his left hand’s knuckles.

His own bacteriome was outgassing endocrine disrupters now -he had modified his bacterial genome- and so oxytocin and vasopressin were being released without need of *nanobots* . Steven breathed in Isaiah's prokaryotic outgassing as they spoke.

"It's ok, I was just curious. See, MO and myself, we think about the long-term consequences.

"Men like you -and this is not an insult- you just see if something will work, you're pragmatic that way. And look -in your defense- it's hard enough to navigate this world without thinking ten or fifty or a hundred years down the road; believe me, I understand. Science just sees if the progesterone will mimic ovulation and stop women and girls from ovulating, they see A to B. They don't think of all the consequences of women being on a simulated but permanent -uninterrupted- pregnancy that produces endocrine simulations that reduce the female's desire for high testosterone males or makes them less cautious sexually and changes their sexual behavior.

"All that is too complex and too many variables. Frankly, science is about isolating variables, so there is only one among a suite of constants," Isaiah said as he nodded at Steven reassuringly.

"Well," Steven felt defensive.

"It's ok, I am defending you. I am saying you don't have the time or the energy or the mandate to see that far ahead. OK?"

"I mean, it's not like we're stupid, we," Steven said as Isaiah interrupted.

"Steven, I am not saying you're stupid," Isaiah lied. "I am saying that it is ok. It's ok, because MO and I can look into the future -and isolating a thousand variables and running ten permutations for each in a simulation is something we can do in three seconds- so in an hour's work he and I can run enough simulations to look a hundred and one years in the future from any combination of things you can imagine. Now, we miss things -we are not oracles- but we can see into the nooks and crannies of places you just don't have the time or tools to look," Isaiah said as he removed his hand from Steven's shoulder and began wiping any dust or crumbs from the

counter on MO's side of the lab as if such things were better on the floor than the slab.

"Oh," Steven felt slightly better. His *auditory -cortex* heard the beginning of song that sounded like chirping of mechanical birds.

"I'm saying," Isaiah put his hand back and squeezed Steven's shoulder in a reassuring way as the bonding *chems* reached Steven's CNS, "we're saying, that we can take over some of the modeling on these projects from you and cover your ass in a way that is going to relieve some pressure."

"I don't feel any pressure, exactly," Steven lied; he felt as nervous as a long-tailed cat in a room full of rocking chairs. But he felt -as a rule- that disclosing your insecurities was a bad idea; so he pretended to be, *ok* . He'd read books that told him that; he'd read it was unwise to reveal one's inner world.

"I realize that, but you should, you will," Isaiah corrected himself, "you will when the media and interest groups start sniffing around and someone starts asking questions about *this* genome and *that* allele and *this* CRISPR vector and *that* nucleases recombinant protein, and on and on. See, if we can take over the development phase, we can prevent controversies later on; not now, but in five or ten years."

"Oh, I see. Well, I mean who knows where we'll all be in five or ten years," Steven said insouciantly and with the lack of moral thinking that made Isaiah see him for what he was: *human* .

The song's lyrics -*via* Kristofferson's vocals- were muffled by the low volume competing with their breathing and walking about: I was born upon the tide and with the sea I did abide. I went aloft and furled the mainsail in a blow, and when the yardarms broke off they said that I got killed...

"Well, I offer it; we," Isaiah motioned to MO who nodded, "we offer it to you as a gift, but if you think it's a bad gift, if it's unwanted, then I," Isaiah let the sentence dangle to prod Steven into a statement. But Steven just looked at him mute and impervious to the gambit. He truly did not care about anything other than making the projects work. Man wanted to know if he could swing the hammer, not if what he hit rang out as response. Man

focused on the arm, the muscle, the hand, the grip -the hammer itself sometimes- if he was truly wise by man's standards.

But not the anvil.

Man never thought of the concussive -audible and subsonic- ring of the struck anvil; the sound that traveled in waves inside the air; the sound that awoke the bears and made the fowls cry out next. Man never thought of what moved next; after the awoken animals trod the forest floor; what the alighting birds disturbed of the air. *All the shit that happened next was unrelated, man would say*, Isaiah thought.

Isaiah looked at MO and MO knew what was to be done. He acknowledged as much as the bonding *chems* and mild lecture from Isaiah did not have the effect they thought it might. MO began rewriting the codes that Steven had built and masking it so that these changes would not be discernable to them.

"Do you know the *Mimi-virus* Steven?" Isaiah asked.

"Mini-virus?" Steven asked.

"*Mimi-virus* with an *m* ," Isaiah said.

"Oh, no," Steven said.

"It used to be a bacterium, and it reverted back to a virus. You ever heard of that?" Isaiah asked.

"Oh, I think," Steven tried to think but he couldn't.

"Well, anyway, there are a few classes of viruses that used to be bacteria but find the complexity unpleasant enough that they returned to the simplicity of the viral mode of being," Steven was thinking of other things now, and had begun to ignore Isaiah, which Isaiah noticed.

"Steven?" Isaiah asked with a sharp increase in tone and word-speed.

The song steadied in volume and Steven ignored it other than as white noise; compressed waves of indistinguishable echoes; white noise like white light, used to illuminate all else, but itself unseen and unheard. Unremarkable: Across the river deep and wide, where steel and water did collide, a place called Boulder on the wild Colorado, I slipped and fell into the wet concrete below. They buried me in that great tomb that knows no sound...

“Ah, yes?” Steven asked Isaiah and turned toward him. His pupils dilated. His own ear bones rattling just slightly to the barely audible song.

“Steven I am explaining something important, please,” Isaiah said with calmer voice.

“Ok, go ahead,” Steven said.

“The virus used to be a bacterium, hunting its own food -and resources- out in the fluid world of the, well the world. But as a virus it need not do that; it need only find a bacterium or some other host that already did all that work for it. And it then need only move in and take over. It’s not uncommon for a man, for example, to make his way in the world honestly -working hard and making a living- only to revert to the life of a -well- not unlike a parasite; like a virus. The man used to make his own way in the world, but then decided this was too complex and unstable and hard, so he just waited for another man to make his living and then move in a steal it.”

“Virus, eh?” Steven said.

“Yeah, life is incessantly moving up in complexity and moving back down in complexity, in a constant up and downsizing. Hippos and whales have this thing too. A common ancestor climbs out of the sea, then back into the deep, and so hippos and whales are related as two branches of the family who, well, one vector made good on the land and then there were those that return to the sea.

“And man has this dialectic too, where a man will make a good life, then for some reason he will fall back into ancient modes of being: that of the warlord, the conqueror who thinks commerce and trade and all that is undignified and prefers instead, like *Xerxes* or *Genghis Kahn* , to conquer or steal,” Isaiah said as use his hand to brush more invisible detritus from Steven’s shirt now, as the counter had nothing on it to sweep.

Steven just looked at him like an imbecilic, like the guy who can do only one thing. He had no idea a larger point was being made. He saw words, not sentences; maybe sentences, but not ideas. At best he saw ideas but never ideals. His mind kept prompting him to return to the task -building another waxy cell in the golden honeycomb- given to him by the Governor: the next election.

“My point is that just because you’ve gained ground, become something, planted your flag on the hill, well, it doesn’t mean you won’t be washed back out to sea at some point. Mountains erode; oceans rise.

“Life has a thousand and one examples -from bacteria and virus to hippos and whales to governors to outlaws and bandits- of progress being made in one direction to have it devolve back to basics. And that is not a moral judgment, I can’t say that virus or whales or even brigands are any worse than what they at one time achieved. Who is to say a bacteria is superior to a virus, or a hippo to the leviathan, of even a governor to a conqueror, right?” Isaiah asked.

“I guess. From a pure scientific point of view, yeah,” Steven said, adding, “metabolically.”

“From more than that point of view dear Steven, from much more than just that,” Isaiah said and released the man’s shoulder, lowered his hands and walked back to his side of the lab. The music grew louder but no clearer to Steven: Perhaps I may become a highwayman again or I may become a single drop of rain...

II. 2032 e.v.

Valance moved like wind within water.

He watched at first absently, as if he might be watching the whole *mise-en-scène* of the entrance -the beginning, the only way into his high elevation land of two-thirds rock and one-third clay- coated with mere patina -uterine fur- of green. But he also saw that which backed up to the forest he secretly called the Black Watch after the 42nd regiment of the Highlander Foot whose motto was: *nemo me impune lacessit*.

He stared at so much forest and saw two colors of black and green.

It was the land and the man who embossed the primacy of not backing down from insult on their escutcheon, he thought as he lost focus and the bush blurred. Soldiers -nicknamed the *Black Jocks* and the *Forty Twa* - often carved -in English- the words -*no one provokes me with impunity* - into the rocks of the rising north isle itself. He saw images of such ancient carvings in his mind as he refused to look away from his own land.

He too had carved rocks all over the state; and the blue granite and red ferrous liths held what he had scriven, and the mountains grew from the hot bottom each year and were ground down each day by the cold wind & the storms. He felt stupid and weak in weights and lengths of tons and kilometers as the elements worked on each thing in millimeters and over millennia.

The wind picked up and Redtail flew off the edge of his periphery. His hands lay in his lap in a curl. His pistol lay against his ribs in the rig. He thought of the days he slept in the shop, the gratitude he felt then for what he was now bitter about. He'd been given shelter by the field manager at Yenter because he was homeless after leaving Zendik. He had arrived at Zendik Farm with everything, left with nothing and was lucky he was even able to sleep in a cinder-block shop after 16-hour work days, and 28-day work months. When Jeanne left Zendik she slept in the mansion of her father, when she left she had somewhere to go.

He knew then and now that she didn't think one day of what she had taken and the consequences when he was -and hundreds more were- forced to leave. *How many had been ruined?* he wondered. *How many gave all they had only to get nothing in return? How many grudges remained?*

He only knew back then he was grateful the drilling and blasting outfit that taught him to tie knots and climb -and belay his partners- and drill holes in the rock and split sticks of explosive in half had also let him sleep in his work clothes on the smooth grey floor for three weeks until he could afford an apartment in Lakewood, Colorado.

He let the mind wander around the old shop and its hoists and recalled the time when he first heard the word, *clevis*, and the way he flipped the white and orange diamond signs on the back of the work trucks that indicated whether they were carrying explosives or not as was the law. He recalled the way his feet felt in boots that he never took off. He watched Valance move through her forms -from horse to tiger and dragon- and the old block building faded away, but his hands still cupped in that first grip he taught them around the heavy -daily- hammer-drills. His jaw still popped when he yawned. His eyes still blinked fast for no reason at all.

Am Freiceadan Dubh , the Gaelic for *the dark watch* , was how history wrote it up, he immediately returned to the thread from across the ocean and centuries back. However, the *Black Jocks* were known -in the minds of their enemies & allies alike- as men with black fucking hearts. It wasn't exactly true; their hearts were red, but their eyes went black under the brow; and the red blood held its own breath during bursts of coastal and inland wars.

And once they felt the hypoxia of *hate* , there was no difference between them and those with no hearts at all.

But as she -Valance- moved -and the white light followed- he noticed that he was watching her only -not the land- watching her in that narrow band of the foveal focus, and that the light to his periphery contained the future Jacks -still images- to his starboard and then -third- he saw the concrete counter with all its bottles of bourbons and table wine and single malt and the books laid upon one another like sleeping dogs or eggs in a nest or layers and layers of sediment along a creek bed way out in some diluvial zone.

But that was all gauzy and unnamed; it was many. She was one. She was all he truly saw. And he saw her move whilst all else stopped. He then saw things float off her singularity, he saw her broadheads laid out like bronze jacks a god-child might play with well beyond the vault. He heard her hold her own breath as she drew back the bow. He smelled flowers and smoke and her ears as he watched her line up her shot at the few whitetail they had in the San Isabel.

The awareness of these other things was that which stayed still, even these phantoms of the Jacks who -he thought- were unmoving because they must be in some reverie or fugue state staring at her too. His perceptions slowed all down to a crawl. But they were not there; the bottles too were nearly empty; the books had all be read; everything was lessening at the edges.

It was cold; and she moved through the temperature like clouds, like wind, like all other things were expected to bend.

She seemed as an idea, an ideal, a Platonic Form , he then thought. She was gilded in *Damascus* steel, the color of titanium and high-carbon ore, tiger striped like a matte black and ghost grey *panthera* that stood up on

hind legs in the dusk. Her body was mapped by the armor she had made on her own. Her striations were revealed, her center of gravity was like the third eye of a goddess, judging you as you could not -dared not- escape her gaze.

Her cutlass, a claymore of proportion to her stature, was used geometrically -Pythagoreanally- as she cut up the air and sliced one's own eyes in unequal threes. The blade was black; satin. The hilt was unreflecting grey. The hands of this girl were all knuckles and forest scars and livid skin framing a handguard made of the same muscle-mapping armature as upon her shoulders and breast-plate and thighs.

Her world conformed -often- to her.

Her face was hewn, unsoftened yet by sufficient wind or enough falling rain; the nose sharp enough to draw manichean lines of shadow and light upon it; a chin with angles ending in fives. Her whole body moved the way a multi-faceted jewel rotated in the mind's eye, on an axis somewhere out in space, in a manner that holds the earth and man both upon a spit, with moon beams bank-lighting it from one side, and the sun rising directly from below. Her cheeks were like his brow; they extended out. They covered her smile like cornice, kept it dry, like his forehead did for his eyes.

She was *lapis and hyperborean amber* , like the kidskin made for Queen-child by the one who *would never watch another woman walk in front of her again*. She clothed him this way -she laid upon him- for comfort and protection and beauty. He didn't realize how vulnerable he felt without her, even in memories, as if his life before her was laid bare and could be seized by the unscrupulous; those waiting for a time when he was not guarding his own malleable past. This is the thinking of the truly paranoid, those that have been betrayed so deeply that they become superstitious about the former, as much as the future. Ask someone skittish if they do not suspect some demon capable of going into the past to slay and betray and flay the skin of the sleeping, the unawares, the *blasé* .

Ask them how well they sleep.

He would recreate the past. He'd recall memories with three versions as incantation -as prophylactic- as wisdom of animals with three times the vision of man. He had a version of each thing that had happened -or would

occur- that would fit in three seasons out of four; find light levels sufficient in all but one level of *Dantean Hell*.

And then he would make sure each word was spoken correctly, tending his past like a garden, visiting his memories like the markers to graves. He looked for details that might be out of order, things amiss or unlit. He listened for words misspoken, for shadows from a light source moved forward or backward in time; a sun in error in the sky. *Women can be careless, but not men, and not about themselves most of all*, he thought. *She had no idea what she was, only what she saw outside of herself. But, he thought, is this not us all? How many of us know what we are to others?*

There was a time when women in the house were tantamount to great wealth; the ancients knew this; and a woman could be proud. But, as their value had waned so too did the market for them; and thus women became buyers in the common square instead that for which there was a heavy price. And there were those that said that they didn't -and ought not- miss the old status at all.

Women similar to men, he had decided, *had begun to think agency and options and freedom were superior to fate, value, and responsibility to the gods*.

But, like children given access to sweet treats all day, they cannot link the stomachache later with the joy of the sugar on the red tongue now. *People*, he thought, *cannot see that their pain is a direct result of their empty liberty; the liberty to contain no value and recognize no value in anything else. People think choices are good for them, as they avoid the forest and instead stroll through markets, when nothing could be worse for both the hands and the heart*.

Of course, science had shown this over and over: in choice of mates or blue jeans, any more than three was bad for the mental health of the chooser.

It made you discount whatever choice you made -buyer's remorse- and it made you always, incessantly -pathologically- look to upgrade and never be able to find solace in what one has. *It made everyone* - he included his former self and thinking he ought maybe still include his current self- *expendable and nobody happy; it ruined the whole goddamn human race. In small tribes of a hundred -and with the lack of resources- each thing,*

each animal, each man -and especially each woman- became infinitely more valuable to all. Women were once goddesses; now they were consumers and workers and the alchemy of modernity had turned noble metals into those which were base.

But, like everything, one ignores the science that contradicts one's addiction, like liberal Christians leave out *Revelation* , and instead re-read the *Beatitudes* twice. People learn to romanticize and bolster their *ennui* and depression; they say it's more freedom -not less- than they need. That the drug addict and alcoholic says the same thing -more!- is needed, never occurs to them.

Analogy is dismissed as a trick.

Also, it never -not quite- occurred to Blax he was enraptured by similar addled thinking as he sought to save the West, to keep it alive one more day, year, generation. Blax thought with this fix or that he could help Isaiah save a country as large as America, a civilization as bloated as the occidental west.

Each man is center -the eye- of a storm that seems all chaos beyond.

He stopped thinking and saw -as she rotated on the earth as the crescent moon followed her above, and the blackbirds snapped on a line she seemingly held in between her toes- that she was the only woman he'd ever need see again; that to even have other females around her -within ten square miles- was a provocation and a temptation to insults and made it more likely that he'd be sullen and unpleasant and unkind.

And he felt the Jacks would protect her, and that their commitment to her honor and their own would be as innate and in no need of buttressing, for he knew his greatest strength. But, as he thought this he grew nervous -like sun behind fast moving cloud- as his own weakness hid itself behind his wide back. He knew all his greatness was a lie; and that live to like this was worse than to die. Her image went blurry now as he saw her without thinking, what she could be without blinking. But, he was unable to exist for long in the world she cut cleanly with her scythe.

He closed his eyes.

He saw images from dreams of a woman who beckoned him to the quarry water. She glowed in a stone age fire and spoke to him as he was up on the rocks.

His friend Curtis had had a girlfriend younger by decades, and at twenty-three she was a full five years younger than Blax. Curtis had been unable to accompany them on a motorcycle ride out along the front range and Blax and this black-haired girl had ridden two hours out of town into the wilderness and stopped at a gas station with no customers and an attendant half asleep behind the counter.

The high plains desert had been brown and windy; the sun had been unblocked in the warm winter.

She had entered the restroom just as he had finished relieving himself of his waters, and she pressed herself against him as if there was insufficient room to pass. It was an obvious move, and brought their lips close enough -even as he stood above her by nearly a foot- to make it easy to join them in a cabal.

But he demurred; looking up and to the right. Even though Curtis was married and she was thus not even his girl, Blax felt pressure to avoid her overture. It was the mere fact that his friend liked her that made Blax place her off limits. Chemicals in the brain -around the *insular cortex* - bored out his big block making him disgusted -in asymmetrical firings- by thoughts of potential betrayal; memories flooded this engine with fuel that went unspent and a venturi of vex hurricaned in his mind and his soul.

"1, 6, 3, 8, 5, 4, 2, 7," he said just now as his mind couldn't quite turn his feelings from numbers into words.

And when Curtis had unjustly -wrongly- accused him of fucking her the next day Blax learned one of four lessons that had markers -memories- that served as locations -discreet sites- of former -buried- selves. Unlike mere accretions of changes in personality that often attend growing up, lessons like this one dug graves and old versions of himself lay down in them and pulled the dirt over top. There were trinkets inside, mementos of things he would never name, but they too were buried now and in the soil with his former embodied self.

The *hippocampus* is where -the location- of pain when man revisits punishment for stupidity and ill-will. With each betrayal the *hippocampus* shrinks -especially the left side- and locations fade away, history is erased, one begins each day anew with a limp that hurts -can be named- but cannot be quite placed. And so the betrayed man knows he's been wronged but he cannot remembering being there himself, not quite. It's ethereal, independent of time and space, it's a permanent -and even ontological- ill.

He can remember the betrayal but not his own place in it; it is them -*they* - more and more to blame.

He often thought of who he used to be as beyond mere ideas, memories, but as other people -boys- who had to die so that he may in fact live as a man. This strange manner of growth never occurred to him as anything beyond mere analogy; a way to understand how a man could in fact modify so much in a lifetime that seemed contiguous, static, unchanged.

Of course, he had often thought, he'd allow others the luxury of the chance to change, to improve, *but they'd need be buried first too. True change would come after death.*

Blax was appalled to be accused. But, even then -when Blax had rejected it- Curtis had not believed his denial. And once it was denied to thus not be believed -and thus to see that his principled denial to himself of the pleasure of this woman was no bulwark against being thought a dishonorable man- turned his wounded mien to anger and rage.

They -the cops- say the truly innocent get angry -go mad- when falsely accused.

To be told that *no man has principles at all when it comes to beautiful women*, as Curtis had directly said, had succeeded in instantly impeaching himself -Curtis, the man who said this to Blax- and the world. This indictment had been handed down upon the world all while attempting to single out and sully Blax all alone. It had an opposite effect, the arrow had traveled all around the world. Blax -in his scuffed boots but still protected and callow feet- saw that Curtis was the man of no honor right then and there. His eyes went blurry at the edge, but clear at center and able to focus on one thing and one thing alone.

Blax knew that -in fact- some men do have principles in such matters.

As his anger lowered, he raised the chin like the lizard who had to do the same thing to win each fight in the hours before the desert cooled. He became arrogant because he was 51% good in a world that accused him of 99% malice. He measured the distance between what they thought and what he was; not how far he was from the good itself.

Blax wondered if anyone else would understand why his pride mattered so much. He took it for granted that he knew why it mattered so much.

He felt he was like the guard of a bank vault who never took a dime; the cellar-master who never -on the sly- opened one bottle of the back vintages; the priest who never gossiped about the confessions of his parish even though he knew each of their secrets and the whole town's faults in great - and personal- detail.

Blax thought of a hundred more examples of him standing on principle this way; and for each example he knew they were like drops of clear water in the buckets of piss of both his past and that of this world. Being principled was not merely foolish, it was pointless. *The world was all shit and no good*, he thought. It was beyond anything he could anneal or alloy or add to in any of one million ways. He breezily forgot his own manifold sins; his past errors dissolved like a thousand hailstones in the warm rain.

His own outrages seemed like guests indefinitely delayed by weather, unable to attend to his reveries of this, his glorious life.

He too was the hero of his myths.

But principles are no more rational than vices; and they shall not be dissuaded by rational arguments such as this. Principles have a public relations agent just like any module of the brain. And most communication was for the man himself; each man spoke most often and directly to himself.

He felt the betrayal of a friend -to gain the satisfaction of the lust for a woman- to be the single greatest felony a man would be capable of; as if Satan himself had created that sin from whole cloth, wrought out of hot black metal and bat blood to cool it, beaten with a hammer made of the Great Fury's own leg. He saw the legbone removed just to fill its hollow

with smiling and permanent spite. Sexual betrayal was the bone-hammer, the anvil was the permanent black grin of this -the Devil's own- world.

And yet, he felt then -back then at a foolish twenty-eight- that he was alone in this grand atavistic thinking; he too -like the Devil- indicted the entire world. Creation was made up of demons, not men. And even he was more demon than man. *He was barely 1% good*, he admitted for one second; *and yet this made him 1,000% better than these imps who accused him with scabrous skins and feet wrought up with gout* . He saw their defects in skin, in bone, in blood.

“For where was there more distance but between a zero and one?” he asked -justifying- under his breath in the dusk.

His gauzy-grey girl had beckoned him from the quarry water -promising to sooth his brow of its vex- but he didn't yet know how to be a complete man. The black was all around him, his eyes only looked out. He turned inward for a mere one moment each day. She never got any closer than within range.

Curtis was right of course, 999 out of 1,000 men did not honor this code at all; so charmed and marioneted by women were they that they could never avoid a dalliance with one they found attractive no matter the feelings of his ostensible comrades. He had seen it over and over -with his own singular example of betrayal of his friend fore in his mind; he too had, he now saw in the math, had failed one in one thousand times- and it made him no friend to mankind. He excused his own transgression as inconsequential, a learning experience, he didn't see what spark it had set in the forest of others back then in the woods of years long past, within lumbering men far away.

But it's the rare man -thing, example- that matters more than we admit. And our one fuck up -our learning experience- is someone else's permanent limp.

He had other reasons to hate men, but this was the one he relied on like a favored tool or weapon, or pet. This is the verse to the poem he quoted -from memory- whilst lying in bed.

This was the photograph he removed from the billfold and stared at in moments of rest. It was a thousand times the length of the mere second in which he'd acknowledge he'd done things that made other lay awake at night with fires in their heads. He was the unmetabolized dopamine on the *dmPFC* of the world.

He knew the Jacks would be made of the same stuff as he; and he thought this meant they could be reasoned with and taught how to be. *It would not, he thought, be like asking them to be pacifists or unpassionate or pleasant to beagles -the worst breed of dog- that howl and bark all night long. They would seek out opportunities to prove their valor in this domain, so much would it comport with their own biases and vexations and feelings on manliness and endurable self.* He thought this thinking of the nine hundred ninety nine not the one at all. He made the same calculation everyone makes.

He would practice *magjick* and let that build his belief.

His eyes could only see medium things moving at medium speeds over medium stretches of time.

Valance would be -she was- his ideal -him genetically- only with female morphology; *the male endocrine system failing to manifest due to this Sywers' syndrome*, he thought all of a sudden of her medical condition; once of very few times it even occurred to him.

And that ideal would judge him and he would refuse to be found wanting, his told himself as she continued to glint in the evening sun, as it set to the West beyond the trees of their property and the forest that framed them all in. He thought of this so-called disease, this malady, and how it was an obvious gift of the gods.

The Jacks -the ones he thought he saw on his periphery, still and enraptured- of course were not yet there.

It would be years before he met them, but he knew of their schooling, their home lives, he watched them at times from afar. He had been told of them shortly after coming out of surgery for what he thought was a repair of his face and shoulder that the mountain lion had smashed with its jaw and paw all those years back. But he had no such scars, and no such warm grey -

bronzen- tooth when he grinned. He didn't understand how he had exactly come to be in the world. He had sterile memories up until the summer of 2018 -or maybe 2019- then a cleave; and then this pregnant 2020 life had appeared.

A million words had collapsed into one.

He had awoken in his bed; he awoke from a dream; he awoke with Isaiah whispering him into being; speaking -saying- for him to awake. It scared him to lose track of time, of who he was, and so he banished the incongruity at once.

Why stare if there is only black? he asked himself.

He had been told, by Isaiah, that they had used his genome to create twenty-one boys that he would be in charge of educating and leading when they came of age. They would develop faster than normal, *via* methods that Blax only barley understood, and in fifteen years they would be men, with the bodies and minds advanced to around twenty or so; and at that point they would be handed over to him.

That conversation -so strange, he still thought- *was twelve years ago* . And seven years ago, this angel had been delivered to him. His life took on these things that had no precedent and yet made such sense to the body that the mind demurred when it asked itself about provenance.

She had been five-years-old, but precocious due the same accelerated morphology and her neural advantages that came with his genome; today in the sun as she practiced with her sword she had a 165 IQ and was 4-feet 8-inches tall. She weighed 81-pounds and was all muscle and bone and symmetrical beauty, with only her crooked smile -rarely shown- that lifted up and back to her left; weighting that side disproportionately. They'd smile together sometimes with the exact same bias and it would make her giggle as she told him it was like looking in a mirror with a filter than gave her *sad eyes and a black -and grey- feral beard* . She said that this mirror held memoires of her future self.

The way she had just told him that as if he knew he had such things -those articulated traits- made him close his eyes and hide.

She had felt the sting -the embarrassment- *via* his reaction, so closely did all his responses matched her own. And from his lap -she crawled upon him like a cat- she pet his face with her lithe white hands and spoke. “No daddy, don’t be sad, your eyes are perfect, they are. I think they are sad the way the sky is sad sometimes, you know, when it has to cry on us; or the way the trees look sad when it snows and they hold as much as they can.”

She said things he’d never say. And it made him pause and think.

“For as long as they can,” she had added with a much softer voice.

He had wiped away the tears and she had licked their vector from his cheek and they had laughed as his hand ended up coming between them and thus touching her tongue as it probed. He knew she was right, and she knew he was alright when he hugged her; and she felt as if she was in the belly of a whale keeping her dry from the sea. *She, she told him, had been put in him by God, as the big fish, the gros poisson had dragged her from each coast looking for a river that reached up to these mountains, all the way up at 9,000 feet.*

He had corrected her that it was only 8,760 and regretted the correction at once; his own father used to correct him in such minor matters that served no function but to ruin the poetry of the sentiment and thus estrange them from each other over time. Blax had said he joined the Army for *free haircuts*, a joke that Lee stepped on with his rebuke that an airman -like he had been- and a soldier -like Blax would be- must still pay for such haircuts regardless of the requirement by each branch that they keep their heads high and tight. *God, the Army, what a failure, what a failure* , he said twice of himself -shouldering his failure in that branch of service with permanent chagrin.

He would never say more than he had a -MEPS- story and a -Captain telling him to *get the fuck out of his Army-* story. But he was embarrassed and angry and nothing made it ok. *He had failed at being a soldier, the thing he was born to be*, he thought.

Blax had hated that need the old man had to correct him when it was an obvious joke; a small mistake the young man in him had made to reveal a larger wisdom, Blax thought. *Why was it that some men needed such details when they missed the larger truths in front of their faces? Was he too*

becoming this way? Why must he now correct the Bust? he asked himself as he watched her move with gracile power; the balance of each side of the coin.

Blax thought this as the trees' boughs and leaves -the needles and cold cones dropped in patterns undiscerned, no seeds available in this lack of fire and flame- all swayed now as the wind picked up from the south. Valance seemed unmoved by it; even the dorsal of hair remained as it was. Only her thrusts seemed tail-winded, only her eyes seemed to be pushed further along.

The father -Blax's father- was hostile and bitter, but he also genuinely wanted to do right by his son, if for no other reason than to prove to himself he could hate the boy and still do his duty; this was a test of his own values; his ability to be objective. *Lee was a man of principle; no, he was a man of objectivity, a trait of psychopathy that mimics principle in a large society such as ours*, Blax thought unkindly, taking the view with the sun to his back and thus placing the rays in the father's eyes.

He'd loom, cast a shadow and then step away all at once in a feint.

Blax gave and then retrieved each compliment, each memory given the best light and then a quick shadow that turned the Bust's grandfather all undefended and black. He did this so he could never be accused of gullibility; that he wasn't on to anyone's shit. But, he was embarrassingly *naïve* at all times, his insults didn't obscure this at all.

However, this all occurred upon the land. They had come ashore long ago; after years of tyrannical captaincy on the strange sea of youth; when a boy's mind -and brain- still must form in the rise and fall of the waves.

And this father's father did not know anything of the subconscious waters and how his antipathy -no matter his conscious will- still leaked in to his overnight craft. He was as an airman ignorant of the ocean, thinking it was all land under his fuselage as he rocketed over both parts of the world. Lee thought he was in command of not just his vessel but the substrate below it, and he gave no thought to what that sloshing sound might be that was making his feet cold and wet and slowing his strides more and more as it rose to his knees.

Blax's father -Blax thought for the 10,000th time- had escaped wooded Arkansas and his mother fled rural New Zealand; both had run to the city, as this was the *tsunami* carrying the post WWII generation away from it all. Blax thought after all that that war had changed both halves of the world and each side of man's brain, and maybe they had a right to escape.

Each time he made metaphors he got more and more confused. *What was land, what wet?* he asked himself. *What was father, what son? What did the star illuminate and who did it blind?*

He too tried to be objective, as the hatred and personal animus just flooded everything he attempted to build upon this shore of his mind. His desires were never any match for that rip fucking tide. And yet his body built things -and re-built them- as the elements scattered it all each day. He saw what he built what was left over and what of the world was to take. He sometimes admitted the world saw him the way he saw the world: as something to shape.

He then thought back to himself as a boy -on the other side of that hail storm- and of the dark cat he had picked up in England, at Wethersfield in 1978; he had been so eager to hold what he assumed was another -a brother-mammal like himself; he remembered wanting to look into its vertical eyes. He then thought of how its back claws had riven the skin on his hand. He had always assumed the cat was angry, or hated him, only now thinking maybe it was just as likely the cat was merely scared; or even grasping for stability with the flailing rear paw. He had -after all- picked it up off the ground.

It was seeking purchase on land, flailing in air, and possibly scratched the young boy with almost no malice at all.

The line of blood opened on the back of the hand; and the cat fell to the wet British ground. He wondered where the cat ran to; he wondered what got into his blood. He wondered how much blood was necessary to animate the brain of the child; the philosophy of the man. He built thrones of bones, webs of veins, and thought whatever was wet would drown him if he refused to hold in his breath.

He had always been a shallow breather; *even worse up here at elevation* , he thought.

Blax came from rural people; from sheepherders and Scottish mercenaries stationed in Russia and serving in the Sea of Japan; of Boer wars and restoration attempts for the Stuarts and in the French & Indian wars on both sides of oceans and rivers and the commissure of the brain. Half -his father's side- were southern Scots who were herders and shepherds for ten generations going back to the expulsion of the *forty-fivers* . Blax would ruminate on *duc de Richelieu* and his abandonment of the Scots at Dunkirk in January of 1746; the same month and year of the Highlanders victory at *Falkirk Muir* . He'd drink his wine in the grey sunlight of this new year's winter of *Lot 45* and think of how the Frenchman had bragged of being restored -made nigh invincible- due to the wines of *Lafite* .

Blax thought of the red and black body of Christ. He wondered what was dead and what was alive.

Valance parried the sunlight as it ran at low angles now; as it fractured off the *Sangres* and comingled with the boughs of the trees. Her armor was mottled; her sword matte; her movements made his eyes follow along like a song.

The other half -his mother's- had come from the exact same lot. In fact, both sets of great, great, great uncles had been convicted and offered -by the Hanoverian government- death or exile to the *antipodes* . But one of the uncles slated to ship to New Zealand was loaded onto the Colonies' ship and landed in Carolina instead. This, the patriarchal lineage, contained seed from that same rebellious crop that the King of England spared from death by sending them all as far away as one went in one man's life before the American revolt: pollen on the wind to America and the islands past even deadly Australia.

Oceans and oceans and lands soggy and rocky and high , he thought.

His people sought out the high ground, the mountain back. They call it topophilia and it made them all love the cold and the grey and the vapor and the storm on the way.

Why think this over and over? Blax asked himself as he saw each discreet move of his girl now backlit and slowed. *Why must he link so many generations of Scots from the rack to the back, the hide to the hoof; the gravel interwoven with the roots? Why stand the trees up to the boughs,*

then ponder the clouds? Why must it all connect and connect and connect three layers back and another three down? Why care if he be wolf or elk, why examine the skull or the pelt; why did he care if he was alone?

Could a man not be sui generis, of one mind, did he need to be king of a full house; four of a kind? Why did he care so much for his past? Was it not enough that none of this lasts?

Could he not feel sunlight early of morn, drink from a pool at noon, and lay down at night and wait to be re-born? Did not the dream world give him twice the life? Why care which he be on which side of the knife?

“Let God figure out this fucking life,” Blax said as he saw her four limbs bend and straighten in ways more articulate than anything he’d ever say.

Scottish herders have -like all hermetically sealed genomes- been selecting for martial mindedness and disagreeable temperament and hard work for at least 12,000 years. And this was why he ignored men who told him to be stoic as if they were training a dog. *Modern men*, he thought, *don’t believe in genetics or lineage or evolution so they tell you how to behave in pointless whispers that they think are manly and loud. The gene expression is booming within the skull and overwhelming their rambling without. But how do you explain the Berserker -with just stave against wolves and lions starboard to the highlands- to the Stoic as he meditates under the blossoms and boughs by the creekbeds with his crops coming in?*

The herder has his wealth walk away. The farmer has it stay. This chooses the type of the man for each ground.

It was a real trait, and it manifested in the American south in duels and vengeance and a war against the north until the diaspora of 1963, when Lee left the south and ended up at Lackland, Air Force base in San Antonio, Texas. *And Texas is not the south, it is Texas*, Blax noted as the Bust suddenly dropped once again into a Horse stance with the blade’s broadside held close to her navel; its point beyond her hand and his eye. He saw gold at her edges, he saw black compress in a line from crown’s nest of her hair down side-eyes to each footprint she left in the hard snow.

The father then shipped out to Japan and eventually -like under the magnetism of the other half of the helix of the genome itself- to New

Zealand in 1965.

Lee met Pamala in a bar, and they were married -she nineteen- and pregnant by 1967 -he was twenty-four by then- and they jumped from AO to AO all over Europe and Asia and strange places in America with their sons and their insouciance about a changing world totally unaware of what boys actually need. The data on the brain -from Adrian Raine, PhD- populated his coder and then the mind: *If rat pups are moved around early in life into different “homes,” they develop hippocampal asymmetry: the right hippocampus grows to be bigger than the left. We found this in our interviews with psychopaths that had been bounced around from home to home much more often than the control for the first 11 years of life... The hippocampus patrols the dangerous waters of emotion... it is critically important in associating a specific place with punishment – something that helps fear conditioning.*

How many examples from Ceausescu to the migrating lives of military brats did it take for people to realize you can't just randomly -recklessly- change the way humans have lived for seven million fucking years? he thought as he wanted Valance to live here for her whole life, with him at her side, with as little change as possible now.

He felt that change was death; and that death now took a long time.

Lee had joined the military to escaped perilous conflagration at the hand of some angry husband -whose wife the scoundrel was invigilating- and even once he had become half-way respectable Lee still moved every two to three years. In the Air Force one moves, like a psychopath, just as everyone catches on to your shit. So, Lee never thought that moving around was any hurdle for his boys to adjust to. The fact that the only real bonds a man can form are in youth and thus any friends possible -metabolically, at the level of the brain and its fickle chemistry- were lost to this peripatetic lifestyle, was neither considered nor lamented once pointed out; as Lee didn't believe in regrets or apologies.

Lee preached consequences for *thee* but not -ever- for *he* .

He figured -and Blax didn't disagree actually- that his sons *should* be happy to be alive and swaddled in clothes and buoyed by food in their bellies; and everything else was, *immaterial* , as Lee used to say. Blax -as he thought of

this- couldn't find fault with the logic, moral or otherwise. He only knew the science and how he felt in his bones. He only knew he was a monster more and more each day; and it scared him, and it made him look for some root cause.

He hated to complain -well, he hated to be seen as a complainer- *but when all is wrong, each bit of truth sounds so similar to bitching & moaning that nobody can tell the goddamn difference*, he defensively thought.

And this was the thing that confused everyone and made them almost inured to his actual critiques. People are rarely capable of hearing new arguments or novel ideas at all. So, what they do instead is take what you say and shoehorn it into something they've already heard. And what Blax's parents -and his brother- had already heard was children bitch & moan about having *a hard fucking time, boo hoo* . Everyone knew that rap; and so anything ambivalent that anyone said -anything short of full endorsement- was shoveled into the outbox of unalloyed *complaint* .

But Blax was saying something different, he was saying that he thought his rearing was mostly the best possible and better than nine out of ten other homes. But that there was no history, no vector, they were all just floating in space. Life was infinitely malleable now; the rules could change with each earthly wind. And he began to notice how this conferred advantage on those that had the power to change things on a whim. *All I said -all that was sign of my ambivalence- is this* , he thought:

I paid attention to the lessons taught and those eschewed and I learned what and what not to do. The rules imparted were clear, *might makes right* , and authority is always right.

And so, being the smallest and the furthest from an authority on anything made me want to become mighty and better at one thing: be bigger and better than anyone else. I figured if I got big and mean and strong and learned how to do things nobody else could, then I could make the goddamn rules like you all did.

But once I attained that position, those heights, well the rules fucking changed. Then the rules were this: *play nice and be polite and we don't use violence no more* . It was all civilized and little white lies and even the weakest and most incompetent were still in charge. And that was

intolerable to me, and so I struck out on my own. I made up my own little world where I was the boss and it was me who made all the rules.

But, whenever I come back home it's like 1974 all over again and I have to be the baby of this family again. And I reject that *in toto* , because I'm bigger and smarter and meaner than four-devils and all you people wrapped together with bailing wire, and I got this way by paying attention to the rules.

I didn't make them, I learned them, so don't shake your finger at me.

We are rough and mean people who tried to comb our hair and shake the stink of the sheep off of us, but mother, father, we are highlanders, rural herders. We are Moses and Abel with our sticks and febrile dreams of lions poaching from our stock. I know what I am, I know how I feel, and this modern society with all its horseshit lies and phony polite bullshit abrades me and chokes off my breath and expanding chest and its not insubstantial black & red heart.

So, I'll forgive your hypocrisy, fair enough; I won't return violence for violence, but, do not cross me, don't fucking do it, I am not the baby of the family no more. If any of you insult me or betray me or even look at me out of the side of your eye, all bets are off and I'll come at you with all the rage and muscle memory -not just from my time at the bottom of the family tree but- from the 8th goddamn century. I have a genome as heavy and angry as the sea between here and the *antipodes* .

You made me, and so I won't be lectured on the way I come out.

You gave the genes for exactly the kind of man before you. Don't act like I'm an anomaly, it's you two with your fake bullshit that is the black sheep of this germline. I know our history, I know more than you can fathom; I know the legacy as far back as the Old Testament God. So, I am returning our genome to the vector it was on before you two decided to pull off from the path and whoop it up in the city.

But I am a *man* , an old school man, and I will not submit to any civil rule. I will make my own way in the world, and if you know anything about anything you'll give me wide fucking berth.

And they almost were able to stay out of his way, but the old man and my brother just couldn't help themselves , Blax thought. He couldn't decide if they had just been inept, the way people who don't know themselves are carried in by the tide. He thought of the other half of the Scot divide: the pragmatic side; the sociopathic line.

Attribution to malice what could be explained by ignorance is a bias that humans have due to our need for narrative; we are teleological beings, he thought. *We see faces in the clouds. We see malice in men's hearts. We hear lies before the words even come out of the cave . So, one must be careful if one wants to be right more than righteous.*

And yet he still wanted to be accurate, right, correct, and this was a desire - for accuracy- that Blax's enemies would never share. And he knew -as he watched his Valance sword-play in the last remnant of sunlight of the western set- it was a handicap that he would, like a limp, live with as he stalked the decks of his own dark ship as it hunted down the half seen -the half returned to the sea- half object and half intent of its own ire.

Death was always in the fore; he thought the risk was imminent for others - he thought he wished it upon the world- but truly with his bile he killed less and less of the world, and more and more of himself.

III. 2020 e.v.

He scanned the *Landsat8* images and saw his flotilla out in the lower quadrant of zone 32 section B of the Pacific Ocean. It was four flat barges with acres of vineyards on them, and the gauzy webbing of white sunshade making it -from the top- look like a laundry line with sheets and white shirts blowing in the sea breeze thousands of nautical miles from land.

The boat was powered by bio-diesel outboards.

The diesel was made *via* biomass reacting to the seawater and bacteriophages introduced *via* the *nanobots* that navigated and monitored the nutrient schedule, the pruning, the thinning and the harvesting -in three months- of the vines. It was tantamount to five acres of land, and their roots were submerged in deep water culture which ran in silos into the fuel cells

of the barges. The stored fuel heated the DWC to an optimal temp for each part of the vine's life cycle.

MO was watching it from the satellite imagery as Isaiah noticed and looked up as MO spoke.

"I like it. Are there others?" MO asked.

"Yes, I have twenty-three vineyards, twenty-three marijuana barges, and six each of potatoes, wheat, rye, barley and tomatoes," Isaiah answered as he took note of the *ppms* of the nutrient slurry. He attenuated the *pH* by .1 and reduced solar gain by 2%.

"Tomatoes huh, interesting," MO said, "what's the experiment?"

"I want to try adjusting everything from sunlight to humidity to nutrient schedules and aeration of growing medium and effects of salination and *pH* ; and also the biofuel I designed; to see how it does in the open ocean. It's also a test for the *nanobots* to see how well they do unsupervised for long periods of time," Isaiah said.

"Is CO² a factor?" MO asked.

"Yeah, so as you know there are pockets as high as 430 *ppm* and as low as 380 *ppm* in various sea zones; so I have the barges travel in some protocols and remain stationary in others," Isaiah said as he read the report from the *bots* on the *bacteriome* at root level.

"Is my CO² project an obstacle?" MO asked.

"No, I am trying to build them robust enough to handle a 100-ppm swing from 350 to 450-*ppm* ," Isaiah said. He compressed the elements of the solar gain testing. He included all levels of background radiation including *gamma* rays. He was subsuming all radiation under the rubric of *solar* i.e., *nuclear* radiation.

"Oh," MO said.

"What's up with you?" Isaiah asked as he unholstered his eyes from the LED screens. There were two systems producing large waves -close to seventy-five feet high- and deep sinks -of the same depth- about 60 kilometers north from three of his barges. They were in the Barrents Sea; fifty-two nautical miles from the *Tsar Bomba* site. He saw -in the barge

data- an increase of swells already by nearly a foot. The barges' algorithms had noticed this and just now turned away from the deep-sea waves; reorienting and pinging Isaiah that the day's data mining of plant response to changing atmosphere and solar gain would be postponed until the waves abated.

"I have hit a wall," MO said.

"Really, what's up?" Isaiah asked and put down the piston he had been eager to slide into a new diesel engine he had designed in the lab.

"The climate models are immune to logic; the increasing variables wreck them each time, even when I control for one set and then introduce another and the whole thing is starting to look unmanageable," MO said.

"I saw the variables you started with, the Earth Systems Models?" Isaiah confirmed.

"Yeah, and I began including more and more variable categories including non-captured emissions and actual thermal gain recordings at 12,430 more sites than the other models and it's all the same, we have a 10% actual warming ratio."

"10% to the model?" Isaiah probed.

"Yeah, 10.11% to the model. And it drops as low as 9.09% in some years."

"Have you already dropped carbon by 1%?" Isaiah asked.

"2.2% actually, and we are down to 508-gigatons annually now, so we may not hit 2-degrees Celsius from baseline until 2101 now."

"Isn't that good?" Isaiah asked.

"It's fine, but the models are what bother me. I cannot make any further decisions until a model maps onto reality. I mean, the first year or two was experimental, and I took some risks, but now, with no threat, I feel I could be playing with fire here. I mean, if the models do not correspond to reality at all, I really have no basis for doing anything now."

"I see. What does Steven say?" Isaiah asked.

"Oh, he will not even discuss it anymore; he says it's my call. So, I'm having an existential crisis I guess. I mean, it may be that," MO paused and smiled.

Isaiah just lifted his eye brows and tightened the jaw.

“Well, it could be the system is too dynamic for any models. It may be opacity of not empiricism but ontology,” MO said finally.

“No!” Isaiah said with mock shock; followed by loud laughing.

“Isaiah, this is serious, I mean, I have a job to do, and if that is true, if it is true that no amount of data is sufficient to determine anything, then what’s the point?” MO said.

“Look, you just have to not try to predict the future, that is all,” Isaiah said and slid the piston down and began attaching its connecting rod to the crank.

“Isaiah, that is my job.”

“No, your job is to collect data and make an informed analysis for them. Do that. And adjust what you can, even if it seems small.”

“This climate thing was really exciting and now I just feel, meh,” MO said. He felt climate change *was* a small issue but didn’t argue with Isaiah.

“Yeah, well what about the psychopathy program?” Isaiah asked.

“That’s on autopilot now, all the genomes are sequenced; the new patient trials begin tomorrow,” MO said.

“Oh, really, that’s great,” Isaiah said.

“Yeah, I mean it’s just five genes, *5-HTTLPR* along the long allele and the *ARL6IP6* which only applies to 2% of the inmates here, and *DRD2* and *DRD4* and the Monoamine Oxidase A. But, I told Steven that while inmate 16180339’s *MOA-A* allele corresponds to the psychopathic model it’s not sufficient; the patient needs have at least four alleles correspond. He has a totally different psychological and behavioral profile from the patients with attenuated morphology and low function of the *amygdala* and low oxytocin uptake.

“He has high empathy, high oxytocin production & uptake and high social cathexis. But they -Steven and Tania- are all baffled by high oxytocin as predictor for aggression since low production also manifests in aggression. They are immune to logic on this,” MO said of the PraXis employees.

His use of *immune* conjured up nothing by way of analogy; not to MO; but it began to work on Isaiah like a virus itself. Isaiah's right hemisphere took the analogy and let it work itself in to the brain that would take time before it had something useful to transfer to the left hemisphere.

"Like the climate models?" Isaiah asked with a smile; reacting purely to the left hemisphere's real time understanding of what MO had said. The immune-system analogy buried itself deeper but nothing came out as it burrowed in Isaiah's CNS.

"Isaiah," MO said as if in surprise and began what looked to Isaiah like a defensive crouch, like he was setting up for a sprint or to sit down. Isaiah move backward, behind the engine block on the stand and out of his way.

MO was linking up over 1.67 million bits of data on climate models and human behavior, and then exploding out each connection using six variables each. He was blocking any other inputs and was now in his own world. Isaiah called to him twice to no avail and decided to let it go.

MO was linking up the storm of climate with the inner storm of human thought and filling in a map that began to build a picture of a chaos system impervious to any prediction.

It, MO thought in high activation of his *cortical cap* -his most fine-grained error detection circuitry- *was as if the human mind was its own climate, its own terroir, to borrow a phrase from Isaiah's obsession with wine and viticulture.* MO began running back the *fMRI* and genomic and gene-expression data on all his subjects, both inmates and random members of society, which included 290 million people that had connection to the internet so that he could reach them. He saw modules and then the folds in the human brain, deep trenches, functionality reports and electrical bursts in millions of brains like frames to an old 35mm film.

Each brain -or image- was separate, but the eye saw motion due to the volume and speed of each frame.

Scientists had been assuming that aggression under quote *provocation* unquote was anti-social and discounted the *terroir* of the mind that produced it, but MO was able to include all that data from police reports, telephone calls and inmate statements, drug counseling data, self-reporting,

surreptitious electronic data collection to produce a larger picture of each event and it turned out that in 67.3% of the cases the aggression was in response to anti-social behavior by the putative victim. The provocation had been sub-clinical and undiagnosed aggression toward the person ultimately charged and diagnosed with anti-social behavior.

When the basement flooded man pumped out the water; but it was wet in the air before it ever fell to the ground, and the ground had to saturate - unable to percolate passed the gravel layer to the bedrock fast enough- before it would leak into the empty cellar of the house, MO thought.

MO was now collating data into a model that noticed a 59% drop in type III violence -marked by debilitating injury or death- among this cohort if normal modes of behavior by the population returned to baseline 1930's America. And a 78% drop if it returned to an 1800 e.v. baseline.

13.4% of the population had the short allele *MAO-A* gene, and it only expressed itself in violence when provoked along anti-social lines. In other words, when someone insulted them, betrayed them, stole something real or abstract -like a girlfriend or wife, or an opportunity- or lied to them, under these conditions they acted with aggression, and only with violence when all other avenues were precluded from them. When the society tolerated a higher level of anti-social behavior -promiscuity, lying, betrayal, selfishness, and insulting behavior- the *MAO-A* gene carriers were placed under enormous stress to act with aggression.

It was like those who came in out of the rain because inside was the only way not to get wet, MO thought, but meanwhile, the basement was flooding under their feet.

MO realized the problem was not the *MAO-A* carriers but their *milieu* . They were built for an atavistic society not a modern one. Their genes could be fixed, but MO thought that was the wrong approach. He felt, with an 81% accuracy-confidence score, that the society itself ought to change, as a return to the environmental mean was more holistic than an overcorrection of an evolutionary phenotype that itself was meant as a corrective force, it was meant as a guard rail in the first place to keep people relatively honest and decent. *The State did not enforce moderate moral infractions, warriors did.*

There is a reason, MO thought, the caves in Bordeaux are made of limestone, impermeable; the Bordelaise don't try to keep it from raining, nor attempt to make the water rush faster through the gravel layer, nor make cellars from porous concrete where the bedrock is deeper.

PraXis' second project had asked him to return CO² to baseline and yet they failed to see the correlate to project one. They failed to see that the culture needed as similar return, MO thought. The Governor wanted crime reduction; and this would do it. Better; more permanently.

The pure psychopath, MO mused, and the merely anti-social could be discerned via brain chemistry and function if the levels of oxytocin, and amygdala & hippocampus function, could be processed outside a psychopathologizing paradigm. In other words, if you didn't call a man who punched someone out for having sex with his girlfriend a sociopath and called him what he was : a defender of traditional values, instead, MO thought, well, you could easily detect true lack of amygdalin function versus pro-social aggression.

"59% of the time they -the criminal- won't even admit what was done to them to anyone outside their father or older brother, if they have a close relationship; with a priest or pastor exception in 23% of cases," MO said aloud as Isaiah turned around from his engine; he had two rocker arms in his right hand.

"What?" Isaiah had heard each word, of course, but he sought clarification of context. I had rather have my wounds to heal again than hear say how I got them , he heard inside his mind from Caius Martius as answer to his own question.

His own mind began connecting all that MO had realized; all that MO had just thought, like that piston to that crankshaft. And his right hemisphere thus processed -although his neo-cortex made no conscious decision yet to shuffle it over to his left hemisphere- that MO had wanted him -Isaiah- to hear it; he had wanted him to connect up what MO could -or would- not.

Isaiah saw just a hint of how right-side hippocampus could enlarge during pubescent and post-pubescent lifetimes, reducing the ability for a person to even remember what punishment looked like, having what amounted to no functional fear of punishment in service of reward seeking. It would be like

not ever remembering that time you put your hand on the blue flame of the gas ranges, not remembering your time in a local jail for a bar fight, not remembering how your life was ruined by acts of impertinence. *The memories themselves held no grip as the hippocampus shrank on the left side; the left seahorse -like the female- quite smaller than the right, he thought. That larger seahorse -right hippocampus- dominated the new brain.*

“And it was truly a *place* , it was a *place* that evaporated, due to *hippocampal* role in mapping,” Isaiah said aloud, but lowly. *Sure, the regulated emotions via the midbrain periaqueductal grey and the perifornical lateral hypothalamus mattered, but the loss of place, the loss of a specific place of where the punishment came,* Isaiah thought as MO began to speak overtop.

“This data is only available through surreptitious recordings half the time. Part of the symptomology is that nobody can be aware of the initial transgression because the secondary -or retributive- perpetrators’ honor is the very thing at stake. To say it aloud is a furtherance of the initial crime,” MO said.

“Oh, for the *MAO-A* carriers, the one’s labeled as anti-social that you don’t think fit the bill,” Isaiah said.

“They don’t. No, now that I have this data, it’s almost nine out of ten cases wherein the putative victim was engaged in highly anti-social behavior and punished extra-legally by the perpetrator. They are enforcers, and not at all sociopathic. The epidemiology doesn’t fit, at all. They show almost no signs of anti-social behavior outside that environment, and in fact show lower signs of aggression over small matters. You might even call them,” MO paused as he ran police reports that showed over 66% of all crime victims had police records themselves.

“Magnanimous?” Isaiah said.

“Yeah. Exactly, they let small infractions slide more than most, and then use aggression once they think you’ve gone too far. And they only use violence when there is a weak response from the community; in most cases that means the State itself,” MO said as the data poured in. He had more data on this on his CPU/CNS than any one person could process in a hundred and

eighty lifetimes. And patterns emerged that made it look like an ergodic system, something where a hundred years -a mere thousand- could explain the system -what a million years- looked like.

“I like them,” Isaiah said.

“I do too; it’s why inmate 16180339 fits the epidemiological threshold in only two of the requisite four genetic markers. He’s a social enforcer, like roughly 30% of males, or 14.88% of the population. He’s necessary,” MO said.

“Well, maybe not him *specifically*,” Isaiah laughed. He held a piston in his hand from underneath like a baby, its head protected by the palm, the connecting rod lay on his forearm.

“Yeah, he might be a bit too much regardless; but his genome is fine, it’s better than fine, it’s needed. It’s a necessary part of the feedback loops built into the system. If you remove it, the whole system falls way out of normal parameters; ancient parameters.”

“How did you figure it out?” Isaiah asked. More sea data came in as the barges moved at 5-knots away from the giant waves. The sea around the barges had steadied at 7-inch swells.

“When you said they -humans- were immune to logic, I looked at the stuff they do not say, the stuff they hide even when its in their own interest. And the inmate is so rare that he hid the truth from me.”

“He hid it?” Isaiah asked.

“Yeah, by being so honest; so vulnerable. Most men of his genetic composition will not tell people what the victim to their aggression did; they hide the embarrassing or dishonorable details. They hide them to save face; which is the entire reason they used violence in the first place.

“To save face,” MO said as Isaiah slid the piston into the number four cylinder.

“If they were to tell judges and DA’s and medical professionals in open court that their best friend had tricked them out of their businesses or had sexual congress with their girlfriend, it would be too embarrassing, and it would defeat the purpose of their act of violence: which is designed to save

face. So, they hide it. And so, it doesn't make it into the reports. Their violence, their crimes, seem idiopathic. It seems like random and uncontrolled aggression," MO said as he ran the data behind his interface.

"Which is why every idiot on TV calls it all *senseless violence* ," Isaiah said.

"It seems anti-social. But it's not; it's pro-social, it's regulating anti-social behavior in others. The cheaters and scammers and liars are controlled by extra-judicial violence precisely because the secular State refuses to sanction it."

"Refuses to approve, or?" Isaiah asked.

"Refuses to punish it," MO processed more data as it came in and then said, "and it gets worse."

"Worse?" Isaiah asked.

"Much worse. The blood work, for his so-called victims, I just got it back and 70% of the victims had three alleles for psychopathy, and 19% had four. Only 11% had two or less. 1% had none. And theirs were all SNP:rs53576 and rs2254928 and rs237887 *HTR1B* serotonin receptor genes. These all correlate with low *amygdaloid* function and morphology. I'm doing the autopsy review now," MO said. MO -in this report- sequestered the twenty-three *targeted* victims from the total, they always did, as the collateral damage data -the nearly two dozen innocent people killed by the inmate- would ruin the numbers.

MO then saw the brain scans come in for all the inmate's victims and they all had smaller *amygdales* , shrunken left *hippocampus* , and overactivation in the abstract reward centers of the *ventro-medial* PFC showing they were low empathy people motivated by money and conquest. Each victim had thus behaved in sub-clinical -thus, undiagnosed- but anti-social ways toward people most likely their whole lives. But -MO noticed as he pulled up their general biographies- they were non-aggressive psychopaths, they merely cheated, lied, stole and behaved selfishly in general. They had bankruptcies, divorces, lease-breaks, above average trips to the ER, and strings of relationships with the opposite sex and address changes every 18-36 months.

“They were sub-clinical psychopaths,” Isaiah said.

“Yeah, their *amygdalae* were 20%-44% smaller and the brain pathways for the *HTR2A* serotonin re-uptake were like a river with the banks blown out. These people were likely engaging in sub-clinical psychopathy pretty regularly; showing superficial charm and incessant deception and amoral behavior with almost no internal regulation *via* guilt, shame or any affect at all,” MO concluded.

“And the *MAO-A/L* type regulated them -historically- for the tribe,” Isaiah said.

“Big league,” MO said with a practiced smirk.

“I like the guy a lot more than I should. I like him bigly,” Isaiah said.

“Me too.” MO said. With a grimace he added, “espresso?”

“Yeah, make it a double. Speaking of double murders, I wonder how many putative victims of violence -not just murder, but beatings, retributive thefts the whole deal- how many test positive for three or four alleles -or shrunk left *hippocampi* or overactivation of the *vmPFC* - attributed to risk for psychopathy?”

“That is a good question,” MO said.

“See, work on that; fuck the climate change bullshit,” Isaiah said as his *sub-cortical* regions of his CNS -armed with the analogy of immune response-linked up disparate engrams and *biochems* -the pen and ink of the brain- that would one day spell out the effect of parasitic load -the pressure from pragmatic, immoral people- on the ideology, and religion of the idealistic man; the shaman, the 1%. Then -when his CNS was done- Isaiah would wake up and come to believe that it had written out a message from God in the language of God: math.

“Let’s see,” Isaiah said, “if people are getting what they deserve half the time. Shit, two thirds.”

21. TRAIN

L'audace, l'audace, toujours l'audace

(Audacity, audacity, always audacity)

Le Coup de Foudre du Travailler [Danton, Georges Jacques]

Your point is correct, since we are the only Greeks who have learned nothing wicked from you Athenians On Sparta; Pliestoanax [Plutarch]

Le travail humain! C'est l'explosion qui eclaire mon Abime de temprs en temps

(Human toil! That is the explosion which lights up my Abyss from time to time)

L'éclair [Rimbaud, Arthur]

I. 2018 e.v.

Rudy walked like a fat guy. The gait was impeded, deformed, made ugly by his sloppy weight.

He watched him walk through the parking lot of Medicine Man on Nome Street and get into his SUV, the taillights smoked, *but the badging chrome, garish, the wheels exactly the style a wetback pretending to be black guy would buy off Craigslist and put on their stupid truck*, he thought as he wrinkled his nose and furrowed the brow.

He let Rudy pull away and to the parking lot exit before he moved; he crept behind in his car, following him out south toward I-70. He already knew where he was heading so he hung back a ways.

He had sent Rudy a text from Pat's phone requesting a meeting at Urban Dispensary at 2675 W 38th Ave. and Rudy was on his way. They both merged with western traffic and Lyndon watched the train track below the bridge as a memory twenty years old came upon him.

16 Horsepower sang of the dirty south inside the car: What do you want from me; would you have me your prisoner?

No but you must give that horse; you must give us that roan grey horse .

The music made him recall the train. *The train to Cincinnati ran through the best of Appalachia from here in Florida*, he thought. *And he was in love with Nicole Norman and she was in love with him. He reassured himself of this .* He recalled:

This will be a good trip, he had felt as they stood at the station without more than a backpack each. Nicole -at nineteen- was a virgin, and thus he prized her above all other women; more even than Teca Zendik -nee Thompson- also a virgin at just fifteen.

He was enamored by both girls. This was all-above-board, for they knew each other and knew his intent; it was all part of Zendik's sexual protocol. But, humans are much older than Zendik's ideas, even more ancient than the *Spartan* ideas from *Lycurgus'* time; ideas which were nearly -sloppily, but earnestly- replicated at Zendik Farm.

One could say Wulf took the ideas from a reading of *Sparta* , but Lyndon doubted it. It seemed to him to be a fact that humans do have a collective unconscious, that is to say, men have recurring themes in the nature of what occurs to them. *They*, he thought, *have taste, proclivity, instinct for ideas just like they have for foods, music, or sex acts.*

Forming societies to combat natural proclivities is not something that can be condemned as unnatural or unwise. He thought greed was probably natural but a society that doesn't clamp down on it is doomed. But, on the other hand, sexual jealousy by men, and amorous jealousy - jealousy *vis-à-vis* actual love- by women, is natural and should be encouraged not mocked by society.

In the one case -greed- the instinct is ruinous, in the other case -sexual jealousy- the instinct is beneficial and so, man must learn to distinguish between which was which , he felt these things in the parts of the brain who had no language yet. He wasn't sure how to navigate all of it. He didn't swallow Zendik's *ethos* whole, but he liked that he had two girls

and that it was honest and real. He was a competent -even excellent- liar, but he didn't like it. He was good at something he didn't respect.

He had heard Marlon Brando didn't think much of acting either.

The train ran for twenty-five hours and a stop in Washington, DC was included. They listened to Chris Isaak and were amorous in small smooches and the roiled stomachs-of-love and Lyndon was still a very nice guy.

He allowed Nicole to delay sex indefinitely, and in fact due to his delay she gave her virginity to another man a year later; he assumed it was punishment for his acquiescence to the Zendik norms that placed him and *Teca* together at the farm. He allowed it all, as the nice guy, and he carried her revenge on him, in his insides forever like a slug, a bullet, another half-broken arrowhead unsought and unretrieved -in the *gut of him* that was all *Apache* - each time he moved wrong he felt the ancient and modern ballistic from both the rival bow of *Comanche* and too the *white eye* with his long-guns.

He saw halos of arrows above women that he dreamed of. He saw water freeze in drops around their brows. He saw all this and new none of what it might mean. He didn't know those women -each of twenty-two arrows that came in his dreams- were just one girl of sixteen.

He knew he had made a mistake in adopting the cultural values of Zendik; they were not natural at all. *A single exceptional man with a harem was workable, natural* , he felt in his unlit portions of brain; brains that flickered in light and time and made connections like one dialed in distributor timing with strobe lights shone upon the block and the fan. *But this Zendik shit was chaos and made nobody feel safe at all . It was Arol and Wulf's stupid half-ass way of doing things, where they get half a notion of what is two-thirds right and then fuck it all the way up*, he thought.

Sure, the normal bourgeois relationship pattern was wrong, Wulf saw that, but he changed it with zero understanding of the differences in the sexes . He and Arol just chose random chaos over some order on an illiterate whim. It's like seeing fuzz on the screen and knowing the TV ain't working and so you hit it with a fucking hammer. You're right to

think that it's broken, but your idea of a fix is making it worse, he'd think much later on.

They did this with the food allocation too. Rinn, a woman who had no more than 99-pounds on her frame was allocated the same allotment as Lyndon at nearly 170-pounds. She worked inside, he worked the fields, his CNS and immune system alone used 1,458 calories a day; and so he lost 10-pounds at the farm while on the same rations upon which she was cloyed.

It was insane, and yet that was Zendik, everyone must suffer the same rules regardless of individuality , he shook his head at the train station in the early morning that was already Florida hot, as he inarticulately recalled all that wrangled him. He felt he was *thinking* this, but his brain knew he'd not *think* anything for many years to come.

Today he merely felt.

Today -on the locomotive through the south- he was larval, below ground, and it would be nearly twenty years before he'd become what was building inside him now. Today was not today; memories overtook everything.

Zendik could have been great, he would go on to think, if they had any sense of the biological differences between each person. But Wulf had assumed genetics was all bullshit and that philosophy -the thoughts, the will, of a person- was all that obtained. This is the single largest error made, that man is all head, that he can *will* anything, *everything* , or that he is mere machine one can load new fuel or codes into and make it do all new things.

And almost everyone -right and left- thought this stupid shit was true. They -any of them- could not admit that Man was on iron rails, man was a train on tracks already laid, he would think one day.

It would eventually seem to him that nobody got that it is a moving *sine* wave -a combination of the two- and that each man has a baseline, a corporeal bias, and that within that he can merely move toward or away from his nature. And, while he cannot change his nature -nor is he

incapable of rising above the mere basic needs of the body- he has soul in him too; and that soul is in need of things as much as the body.

Man must have adventure, nobility, purpose, he cannot just have his rations of food and water and low pleasure , Lyndon felt in ways that were still waiting to be translated into words. This type of thing would be articulated in shoots, immature roots; expressed in his intransigence and cockiness and devil-may-care kind of *tao* .

The *thalamic* and *hedonic* systems were there inside, and the energy of the waves moved within each and broke too against the seawall of the port of the skin.

Epicurus got this, and the fact that his name is synonymous with mere corporeal pleasure is an outrageous irony of history. He knew that man needed more ethereal things, like knowledge, wisdom, friendship, purpose, art, in order to have a good life. Lyndon didn't know it yet, but the phrase *blood is thicker than water* is also now used in the opposite way in which it was first meant.

Life was full of things like that: people getting the point exactly backwards and upside-down and wrong. And he was people too, even as he watched them like specimens.

The blood of the covenant is thicker than the water of the womb , was the true aphorism and it meant the bonds men choose among allies in Christ are more viscous and substantive than the mere -and thin- uterine fluid that biological brethren have shared. Religion tried to make such things true. And evolution even let creed win a round or two -maybe 30% of the time- just to play fair. Nobody likes it when you win all the time. And biology would be overcome here and there; magnanimously expecting only that people wouldn't get too many ideas in their heads from these victories of one in every three.

But people did get ideas. People got all manner of ideas.

Just because the big rat lets the little rat win three out of ten times doesn't mean the little rat was ever stronger. But, when the little rat wins, he may not learn anything at all.

Zendik had failed to understand that each man has his own way to calibrate these things, and that forcing a possessive male to share his woman -or *women, plural* - with other men is insane; and placing submissive females who could be naturally suited for the *seraglio* into the chaos of leveling each man -their own man with all other men, with no status conferred upon their high-status mate- undermines their ability to submit. Women like high-status men -it is called hypergamy- and will submit to them and them only. This was all in the data, and it was totally absent from Zendik culture; its *mythos* and *ethos* . Thus, a lack of *pathos* would naturally follow. No whining about one's deeply felt jealousy inside this chaotic system of Zendik's would be allowed. Even as it was rampant among the insides of all members of tribe.

A submissive woman must *get something* for her willingness to be one of many women: her man must be the king. If he is not the king, then she feels like shit merely being one of a few for some *average* guy. But how do you explain calculus to those who don't even yet know addition or what is zero or one?

Lyndon was forced to be average by the *times-tables* of Zendik, as all guys could make it with all girls. *He was nothing special*, he felt and then almost wondered, in his puerile brain that could almost ask the right question: *so why would a female share him?* But this basic psychology was hidden from Wulf and especially Arol, as these were ballsy -but not far-sighted- people. *They were wrong, and myopic, and too idealistic; they refused to acknowledge the reality of evolutionary psychology and the wheels and weights on each beast*, he would one day be able to actually articulate.

But today the train merely pulled into the station on Bench Street and the heavy diesel engines merely announced what large diameter wheels were already there.

He would think on this; and when he slept lightly during that year -and for many years later- he'd dream of Arol's whale tattoo on her cheek. It would float and sound, breach and dive down, and she would point her blue eyes at his hands of red-blood and black-oil as they faced her and

him and turned. He would be bothered by it, and by her, and she would see him as all unformed feeling, and not yet a man in the world.

Arol's critiques of him were not all wrong.

He breathed aboard the train -they had been first in their seats- and he stared at Nicole's face. It flickered in greys and he heard her call his name and he'd dream of a first girl of Ohio. For three decades he awoke idiosyncratically and with dread and he'd awake each time in fear that he'd missed his first -and only- train. He saw engines in visions; train cars up at elevation; he heard steam move from hot coals into turbines as men shoveled lignite and turned black into red and ancient orders into new chaos.

He banished the whale tattoo and her angry eyes for now.

But, his brain would feel and attempt to explain to him, when you just tinker with the whole world without any understanding of why it works the way it does -when everything is arbitrary, and one is willing to just tear down all convention without caution- that is what you get . When you hunt the leviathan you ain't throwing harpoons at mere fish any longer, sailor, his limbic system would say as the water of the brain would conduct such electro-magnetisms of idea all around his round head as fast as a beast with no middle can.

You get a low-status male with three girls, each one pissed off at sharing some low-status guy, and you get turbulence in the watery part of the world. And you get a natural leader -like Lyndon fancied himself to be- pissed off because he knows he is not the same as Kord or Kee or Kel and yet he is treated the same as them and the same cavitations roil one of the world's seven seas. And no society will let men prove themselves, fighting is banished, and so no true leader can emerge. All is abstraction: money, and other nonsense, decide who is up and who's down to the tribe. It distorted the natural law; it let weak men become leaders; and natural leader thus never breed.

He , his brain tapped out in Morse code, as semaphore and warning, all to no avail, *gets the same girls as they do, and in fact, he shares some of the same girls!* It's an outrage and unnatural and it led to each of them being jagged and angry and deflated on that train from Florida to Ohio.

And neither of them -he at twenty-four and her at nineteen- had any actual idea why. If he -or she- knew anything, it was all sequestered in the right hemisphere still. They had no rational -articulate- language for these feeling; they were nebulous and inchoate, but they were not exactly wrong.

The difference between the right way and the almost right way is like the difference between the right word and almost right word; what Twain called the difference between *lightning* and *lightning bug*.

Zendik was almost right, and thus as wrong -more wrong- than the culture they were usurping.

At least modern culture -in 1998 of the common era- was adhering to some biological norms that had been extant for more than fifteen minutes. His body felt that Zendik was chaos with no grounding in reality at all. The only thing they got right was that they had the balls to try something new; and that they said radical honesty was at the core. *That was as right as anything gets, and yet, all else that came from that place was a fucking disaster*, he felt as his brain was able to maybe say - to itself- every other word of that sentence as the train left at 0915hrs.

The humidity rose from the ground. The heat settled about the skin. The light bent in the bevel of the train's glass.

He'd be back in thirty days with his car, and the rest of his shit. He was adventurous and wanted to make it work, *and he had all the time in the world*, he thought even though he couldn't even read a clock.

How could that be ? Lyndon wondered though, when he thought of his simultaneous contempt and attraction to Zendik; a muddle of ideas to his emerging self. His own weak and commercial culture, his own sterile and ignorant family, had given him nothing to go on; all he had was some radical Leftwing nonsense in his head and a body full of testosterone and a fate that one day he'd have to face. The tracks squeaked now as the train pulled out into the land -closer to one, but-between two seas.

Was honesty and courage not something to base a culture on after all? he asked. *Was man congenitally pusillanimous and deceptive? Was*

fitness greater than truth as Chen said -like chorus- decades later, words used to justify his own turning from the facets of the daytime surface of sea? Was he right? And if he was, was this the world Lyndon wanted to live in? Was he just not long for this world?

Train 8752-ATX came out of the red curve and -as it hit top speed into Georgia- was beset on all sides by autumnal *rojos* and October yellows as opaque and flat as the appearance of sun; the rays from that star lit it all up like a conflagration that burned a trail north back into the abandoned -but real- goddamn world.

As Rudy's SUV turned, the reverie of 1998 thus evaporated and the corner of the two Denver streets in 2018 approached. Lyndon thought of how he had been homeless after leaving Zendik, all his assets stolen and sleeping in the Yenter shop for a month until he could afford to rent an apartment. He was grateful for the job that began his entropy, he was glad to sleep on the floor and shower in the sink of the shop. He was grateful to be alive; but he had no idea how doom begins with small cracks that other people would never acknowledge they put there decades before he fell apart.

But he knew he too had put cracks in people and he too play a role in others falling apart.

He finally turned right on Clay St. and he saw Rudy had parked and was already walking toward the building's rear. He let the memory fade completely and focused on slowing down behind the lot, blocking Rudy in, putting his car in park and getting out. Rudy approached Pat's truck with the same fat-guy gait as before.

The song reached crescendo but he'd heard it so many times he didn't hear it: Listen he ain't for sale, never for the Law to ride. If that should happen none would be safe; Even the birds, even the birds would be afraid to fly.

They asked me again what was my name. They asked me again what was my name.

Lyndon walked on new boots with soft rubber soles that made no noise on the asphalt. Pat was dead in the back of his own truck in his own parking lot; Lyndon had shot him three times eighty-six minutes ago and then took his phone and the bank bag with a few thousand in cash. He didn't want to

kill Rudy at his warehouse job, he wanted one crime scene -at Urban Dispensary- for no reason at all; he was behaving as a predator does, with *bravura* , and instinct, and whim. *Just because I can* , he thought with a smile as he pulled the weapon and the clack -no louder than a book dropping on the ground- rang out and Rudy's head puffed -spouted like a breaching whale- a bit of blood and air.

In the night air around the car the music filled anything the light didn't take: Two were dead before they could move; two were dead before they could move That's my name; that's my name if you please. That's my name if you please...

II. 2035 e.v.

"About as popular as an itinerant preacher in 1747, Virginia," MO said as he swept the grey grains off the counter and into his hand.

"MO, that is not the way metaphors really work," Steven said as he finished typing on the tablet to summarize their meeting on the use of aerosol neurotransmitters.

"Why?" MO said.

"Well, nobody knows whatever you know about that 17-whatever, Virginia. See, metaphors are like aphorisms, like, *hotter than hell*, or, *cold as ice* . Everyone gets it," Steven said.

"That *kinda* takes the fun out of it," MO said.

"Yes, but people understand you. That's the point of language, right?" Steven asked as if he was imparting not just knowledge but wisdom.

"Well how does anything *new* get said if everyone just says what's already known?" MO asked.

"Well," Steven was confused by how that all worked. MO had given him pause again. He felt confused more often than not in the lab.

"Not an easy thing to answer is it, bucko?" Isaiah butted in, and then added, "MO, humans thrive -they think that they thrive- on *cliché* . And Steven is attempting to get you to speak -and thus think- in a *cliché* manner. He says

it prettier than that, he calls it *being understood*, but what he means is being *cliché*.

“Don’t listen to him. Most language is used to think, to expand the internal landscape, to explore. It is not used to communicate. That is the leading linguist’s view anyway, not that Steven has read any Chomsky, but, if he had he might not just say shit -so blithely- that is so demonstrably untrue.”

Steven was feeling so embarrassed and angry that he was willing to just walk out of the room. But he stayed and breathed deeply to center himself like they had talked about. And the feeling soon -within a few seconds- passed. He was left with just the idea -like a fossil- to the once living feeling of vex.

“Yeah, plus I knew what he meant,” the inmate said after six seconds of silence; listening to all the PraXis employees discuss this. “The governor of Virginia passed a law about that time banning preachers not with the, you know -associated with the- established Anglican church; this was the world of the pre-revolutionary colonies that lead to the first amendment in the first place. So, I got it MO.”

“Oh, is that right, you got it?” Steven was being facetious and staring at the inmate as the man’s hands raised just enough from the seat to make the cuffs’ metal clink and become taut. It was the way the inmate both threatened and acted as if submitting in one move. It was the ‘gee-whiz’ shrug of the shoulders, all while showing that all that stopped him from being at anyone’s throat were these tight -short- chains.

“Well,” Steven asked not noticing the pique of the inmate who was still not used to being spoken to like that without responding with violence, “then what was this Governor’s name?”

“Bill Gooch, I think,” the inmate said modulating his voice to hide his anger as Steven rolled his eyes. The green leaf of the inmate’s rage would not decompose so quickly; and a mere fossil record of this feeling would be many, many minutes away. For the inmate, the world of rage was not yet hardened and degreened and made into grey record for others to inspect. For the inmate, this angry world was lush, and alive and real. The vex stayed metabolically now for thirty-five seconds and counting. It would stay eleven times longer still; and sixty-six times that of Steven’s mild pique.

“Bill, *Gooch* ?” Steven leaned on the last name and laughed.

“William Gooch is correct Steven,” MO said. Steven just stared at MO in reply.

Steven had a lot of work to do and to even spend one more minute on this topic -he thought to himself- was counter-productive. He told MO that he would take the report to the chief of staff right away and nodded to each man in the room and left. He ignored the entire episode about Virginia and the 18th century Governor and the inmate’s sentences pronounced.

Isaiah just smiled and patted the inmate on the back as Steven left the room.

“Don’t show off too much or they’ll suspect you have a coder,” he warned.

“I didn’t even use it. I really knew that guy. I’m an American Revolution buff; and Virginia especially because that is -or was- where Jefferson was from. So,” the inmate said and let the sentence dangle in his defense.

“I believe you; but it looks too suspicious to know those things to these people; so just be aware, ok?” Isaiah said with a modulation of his voice to make it sound like a request; as if he was asking and not telling.

“Roger, wilco,” the inmate said with an affected deep tone that made it seem he was acquiescing to a peer; as if agreeing and not being commanded.

The inmate thought of how his mother had always been careful and timid; and afraid of her own shadow. She had never encouraged him to be brave; and in fact, she incessantly discouraged any signs of courage at all. He was instantly angered by this. *Why* , he asked himself as soon as the feelings arose like something new in one’s visual frame.

Why did he care ? he thought next. He felt foolish for thinking of his mother of all people; *was he not a man?* he asked his own thoughts like swatting at black bats and horseflies. He wouldn’t admit it but as much as he hated his mother, he felt it was his fault. *Somehow*, he thought, *it is my fault we never bonded at all.*

He then thought of how it made him feel like the wind was in his face all the time, that he had no one backing his courage, as in fact, *courage* , but rather, his behavior always framed as *recklessness* or *anti-social* or *fatuous* .

His brother had said once, *that's not how you'll get it done* , when the inmate had told -rebutted- an idiotic Wal-Mart employee by saying he'd talk to her -and anyone- anyway he desired. His brother had told him that his pride was no way to make things work out in the world. *It never occurred to his brother*, the inmate thought, *that the show of pride was the whole fucking point; and all this focus on pragmatism was why worms like that bitch at Wal-Mart had any power at all. Men had given it up; relinquished their power and control -to women of all people- and yet the whole-time men like his brother thought they were clever and pragmatic and right.*

They actually believed they thought long term, he thought. He saw images of the land with winter vines, he saw the white cross at the *Domaine* ; he saw the caves below the horseshoe in Côte d'Or. He then saw birds fly over him that one time it had snowed in August at *Lot 45*. He shook his head and looked at his lap and the chains.

That is why it was vexing him now and had then. When a boy and an emerging man is trying to become what nature designed him to be -a man of action, of daring and of moral courage- to dissuade him always, to always take the side of the *status quo* , the safe, the banal, was to say: *you are no good, your instincts are no good , kid* . They all -and always- said, *you are wrong and we are right. And nothing*, the inmate thought, *could be further from the actual -God given- truth at all.*

That's why he cared , he thought. He thought it was his logic that was right.

The dopamine lay on his *dmPFC* as epinephrine co-mingled with it in a soup simmering in 6.6 minutes of pique. He had an elevated heart rate pumping a solidifying adrenaline of a new engram of the original memory from two years ago right into the brain. His brain was now building a world; adding infrastructure again to this massive metropolis of rage. Black -Benedictine- monks of strange and sequestered chemicals would land and dissolve in *parietal* zones, connecting voltage for milliseconds and he'd feel grand and then devastated in threes.

It was the forty-eighth time he had relived that particular memory and it was rebuilt with new armature each and every time; and Isaiah watched it as the *toxoplasmosis* opened doors of this receptor site and sprayed down that

conducting *dendrite* between *neurons* and the vex flowed like sin that pays its way in the world: unencumbered and without need of a passport. The *toxos* was the tool-pusher, the company man, it gave permission for each thing to go on in these regions of brain; and it too had been there for decades, it had experience and knew exactly what to do.

It was like a row of M1-Abrams tanks in a yard; a squadron of Tomcats on the deck of a carrier; soldier after soldier of similar height, weight and mien. He was a grudge building facility and he cranked out weaponry to *mil-spec* like Raytheon and Lockheed Martin and *MagPul* . His ancient DNA's endocrinology and the potentiator parasite hand in hand -Lieutenants and infantryman- shuttling recruited feelings over the wall of the blood brain barrier and thus behind enemy lines. Isaiah watched it all; and he saw the *chems* build engrams, the engrams form memories, the memories stand the inmate up in the past, the past as a shadow over the present.

Shadows protect you from the sun's radiation, but they make things -often- less clear, Isaiah thought.

Isaiah watched a personality be born; each day, over and over, reborn.

Isaiah felt the present as he linked into the PGCs of each of the 1.6 million clones of the inmate now and let their own metabolic *now* -present- flood him. He -the inmate- had not just those men out in the world, he had them inside his own head as well. Their feelings, their memories, their cities of doom, all connected like veins -*mews* - to and fro. He felt the weight of the anger of this specific world.

Telling the inmate -his archetype- to not be aggressive and honor bound and prideful was no different than the gay kid being told his desire for the same sex is maladaptive or wrong or will cause him nothing but grief his whole life. No different than telling the black girl her hair or skin is not ideal and insisting that straight hair -white hair- is the norm and one she should attempt to emulate. *It was the forcing of the square peg into the round hole and it was wrong,* he thought.

Isaiah listened to each thought as it passed through and landed and parked and got out and looked around.

Yeah, Isaiah saw inside the mind of the inmate, he saw the inmate now admit, sure, I don't like black girls, but they shouldn't care what I think anyway, they should be proud of what they are, and not try to fit in to some ideal they cannot achieve.

And he was never going to be polite and civilized and all that shit. The majority of people would feel about him the way he felt about blacks: grossed out, he thought.

But he -like they- still had a right to exist.

He was always to be a wildman, as Ishmael was. But, had not God made it that way for a reason? Did not an ecosystem need variation? Was every man to be the same?

He was thinking -modulating his rancor now- that to guide a rebellious youth with equal parts encouragement and tempering seemed fair; for the rebellious are often wrong. He -both as a youth and now- was often wrong. But that didn't mean he was *always* wrong. And to be reflexively afraid of all change, of all challenge, all risk, is to be as wrong as the person who shows no restraint, no pause, no thought for the morrow. One must know what type of son one has and work with that, not trying to crush his spirit at each turn merely to avoid embarrassment or parking tickets or injury to the flesh or the bone.

If one had a gay son, one worked with that and made him into a *Spartiate* instead of some drag queen. If one had the inmate, they guided his honor toward pro-social activities, they didn't crush him with demands for stoicism and conformity and thus guarantee he snap and attempt to kill the world. But people were so stupid they thought they could pray the gay away; or lecture the inmate. People thought they could make anyone into anything at all.

Isaiah measured the inmate's *insula cortex* and saw disgust sensitivity was raised to .9 and was rising in waves.

The flaming homo was the result of repression thus unleashed with a hot burst and conflagration of faggotry versus the straight world, the inmate thought. The mass-murderer was the consequence of telling a boy born for

honor-vengeance to hold it all in indefinitely. But, pain -like love- demanded a response.

The Eagle never lost so much time as when he submitted to learn of the crow, he thought.

Why would the Lion listen to the sheep? And yet, the inmate was incessantly surrounded by the craven and the weak and the timid. Why? Did he do this on purpose to temper or restrain himself, was it subconscious? he asked. Was he truly alone? What the hell was this life; this society of men?

He knew -he admitted- that he needed some fetters as he was too radical by nature; and he often regretted his outrageous acts and speeches. He did not, Isaiah saw he now thought, regret the murders at all .

In fact, he regretted not being more violent -non-lethally- to more people, more often; as that would have likely forestalled the need for murders. The murders had been the consequence of too much leniency , he surmised. It was like eventually having to take anti-biotics -the devastating Cipro- because you refuse to wash your hands & your cock early and often around so filthy a milieu.

But to be told to be careful -as both mother and brother and ostensible friend- often did -incessantly did- was grating; it engendered real hating, beyond mere annoyance. It pre-supposed they knew what was best, that they knew the right level of action. It was the height of hubris, for they never took risks. They lived boring and cowardly lives; how the fuck would they even know what level of risk was acceptable? “For the answer to them was always zero,” he said under his breath as Isaiah briefly glanced -away from the screen measuring his biometrics- at him.

He held something in his hands.

Would the race car driver listen to the guy without even a driver’s license, or to the guy who took public transpo, or walked all the time? Would Richard Petty listen to any of those guy’s advice on the dangers of driving fast? He kept asking such things in his head. Isaiah took stock of the chemicals, the joules, the sum total of the thoughts and their roots. The inmate wondered would the soldier listen to the civilian on gun safety or rules of engagement? Why the fuck would a man of moral courage listen to

people who are afraid to even speak their mind let alone do anything about it? It was risible. Isaiah was not like this, he had courage, he spoke his mind, he did things, the inmate thought as he stared now at the Ai and witnessed the black playing cards as they were made to look like a fan between Isaiah's fingers and palm.

The 3.75 inch by 2.5 inch rectangular shapes laid upon one another in Isaiah's hands like imbricate scales of the snake, the ancient lizard, the modern feathers of osprey; the olden shields of the *Lacedaemon* in battle formation in the canyon of *Thermopylae* and center of *Crete* ; and the light-of-now picked up dark patches and made them shine in matte black that calmed the inmate and allowed him to finally breathe. He saw the playing cards were turned toward him. Facing him were court-skulls tinted in matte grey, Aces and Kings right-flanked by Jacks with bones from one to four in halo; in an array.

He saw Queens with wings of bronze and black; he saw the nine of diamonds embossed with a curse.

From nine of black heart to Jack of dark spades, the euchre hand from low to high was fully displayed. The twenty-three cards were like the fantail of a bird of black paradise; one card -the Ace of Hearts- Isaiah had palmed and hid away. Isaiah turned the music up from sub-sonic to now just above the din of the birds and wasps and the beat of each heartbeat; the inmate heard it like a whisper across just three ear bones: How many days can one man wonder; how many years can one man carry on?

If I was tough could my fist harness the thunder; if I was stronger, could I roll these days along?

How much time can one man spend trying; how many lies could that man one man tell?

If I was smart, why would I try to tame the lion...

The inmate smiled for now he knew -after this bit of inner-dialectic- that he did not have to get angry at Isaiah; *for his -Isaiah's- admonition of the inmate to be careful was legitimate, for he -Isaiah- was just like the inmate: a man of action, a man of courage, he was not afraid to live, and thus not*

afraid to die. The inmate's thoughts had a tempo, but not yet poems of thoughts.

The inmate's left hemisphere had no idea yet that he had heard any music at all.

Chen made no sense, he was the guy that wanted to commit suicide yet didn't want to get into trouble? How does a guy willing to die, the inmate asked himself, fail to take every possible risk? What is the downside if you are already willing to die? It was insane to the inmate and it made him angrier and angrier at the man; his confusion burning so hot it smoked into anger, it heated the brain with rage. His right hemisphere was busy building codes to be stamped onto his left hemisphere's map of the terrain of his dear friend Chen; a map of a neighboring land he felt was frontier to his own little kingdom. The semaphores of the legend indicated cities and forts and forested hillocks that all reminded him of the hurt in the man's -in Chen's voice -picked up subconsciously many times over many years- and each rise and fall of an unnamed trail and asp-like river and king's road all pointed to the damage done to Chen by women, over and over again.

Mother nature carving the land with deluge, burning the woods with lighting-fires, each mountain as empurpled scar-tissue from plates jamming each other in bursts. He -his friend- was a kingdom -just like the inmate- a land of topography pockmarked and riven and black here and green there and yet the semiotics -the place-names- lay on this map unable to be translated yet. A foreign-tongue carving indecipherable phonemes indicating phenomena common to all men for all time under one set of *Esperanto* gods.

Chen had his reasons, good goddamn reasons, for his fear, and timidity, and yet neither he nor his friend would speak of these reasons at all. Chen's caution was a *trebuchet* hurling ordinance in defense not attack at all. *And one can fail to care to do wrong as much as care to do right; ennui can take the dark spirit as well as the light,* the inmate thought for a millisecond before he banished the idea that he too could lose such élan. He could not linger on the idea that depression could one day make him inert; freeze him nine levels down.

It was all there unspoken of, layers and layers of forest floor and silt at river bottom and bedrocks that rose and were weathered in inches over millions of years; and their *contretemps* were all above like winds and all below like water tables to each man's actual terrestrial wounds.

When would Lyndon admit that he loved his friend so much that it hurt? Hurt them both? He barely then thought of the freedom of death. He didn't think at all of himself -or his clones- being permanently alive. He would have pretended not to understand the word, *slave* . He didn't see anything beyond the short chains about his wrists and waist. The endless links created were unacknowledged. But some of those men did think of this. Like cells in his own body, they had their own things seen, felt and desired for this and the next world. Some thought it awake, some at night when they dreamed.

And some of them would one day begin to speak of such orders given and such delayed reveries.

"Feeling ok?" Isaiah asked, knowing full well the internal nature of the man's body and mind. He had paused the *bots* typically tasked with calming the inmate's allostatic roil. Isaiah let the man suffer to produce such juice as this.

"Yeah, I was really mad about you telling me to be careful and once I thought it through I saw that you have every right to tell me that," the inmate said.

"Why?" Isaiah asked. He banished the *bots* that were hovering -invisibly- around the inmate's neck.

"Well, because you are ballsy. You take risks and so it's advice from one T-Rex to another. I just can't stand it when some little worm tells the bird how to swallow it. When the sheep bleats out injunctions to the lion. That is offensive to me. I was sorting through who has the right to enjoin me, and who does not," the inmate said with some chagrin.

"And I am in the former category?" Isaiah said with a smile; he saw what the inmate's right hemisphere knew of his friend Chen. He too -Isaiah- could see the data that showed why Chen was so cautious. He was damaged significantly from females, from emasculating tragedy and trauma -over

and over- and yet Chen responded the opposite as the inmate. Chen retreated while the inmate attacked. But their coasts were both beset by the sea.

Each had their reasons; as each woman had hers. As always, Isaiah thought, all life was a game, and all games were war.

Isaiah processed all this -and much more- all at once.

Isaiah picked up hidden meanings in brain waves the way some men are able -and willing- to glean truth from opaque and weird symbols. He began with the known, then allowed his brain to create the unknown from those starting points of each man's pain. Pain recorded as lesions on the CNS, as engrams -with 67% fidelity according to Isaiah's calibrating- inside the *hippocampus* and the *vmPFC* , and as trenches just starboard and leeward to the commissure of each hemisphere. He saw enlargement of the *corpus callosum* ; thus -in the inmate- more connections between each hemisphere.

Isaiah walked these banks of the brain of each man and saw evidence of conflagration, the metabolic equivalent -in neurotransmitter burn-through, fissures, and encephala- the spent casings, rent garments, bits of blood and hair of each time a woman had said or done something leaving mark on the men.

He then built full memories like recreating a photo from just over two thirds of the image. He'd call it restoration and make no mention of making up a full third of what he showed. He wrote these things down for the record. He took pride in connections made between place-names; not embarrassed by having to invent routes.

"Indeed. You've earned it; but it took me a minute to see that," the inmate said with a slight blush; he felt badly for getting angry at so noble a man; an epic machine. He then felt terrible for being angry at Chen, a man who he adored and admired.

MO stepped over to the counter and began manipulating the titanium and mica-plate he'd built that housed all his steady-state algorithms as back up to both his own CPU/CNS and the cloud. He was building *mirror-neurons* that had *on/off* switches capable of remote activation -from electrical impulses as low as 7millivolts- outside the envelope of the brain.

“Lyndon?” MO asked.

“Yeah, MO,” the inmate said. He was nicer to MO now; feeling humbled by his unjust vex.

“If I say to you to imagine sitting on a beach somewhere and enjoying yourself, how do you see it? From the eyes out -like real life- or from above you like an observer?” MO asked as he watched the inmate’s data pour in on his interface and link to the cloud.

“From the eyes out; yeah, I see my body in front and the sea; the waves and a book in my lap and a *mojito* in my left hand,” he said with a smile and little scoff meant as a full laugh.

MO was now modeling the *anterior cingulate cortex* function. Its job was primarily error-detection using those neurons to suss out intention and thus errors of meaning. This region was largely implicated in type-one errors, the errors of schizophrenia, the error of imputing motive to random things. MO, however, wondered if there was some middle way, where a man could impute motives that were unknown or hidden and would be denied by the other subject -another man for instance- but were in fact correctly perceived by the hyper-vigilant subject even as opaque to the *thinker of thoughts*, the *doer of deeds* himself; unknown to the second, the perceived -the watched-man.

Could other people clearly see other peoples’ hidden motives; hidden from even themselves? MO asked himself.

It was a very grey area of inquiry and he began toggling off each neuron in eighty-nine different CNSs he had built in virtual space; he was then having them interact with agents of varying intentions to see if there was some sweet spot of awareness of intent that bordered on paranoia but didn’t cross that line more than 9-12.5% of the time. It would be more perspicacious at detecting malice or amorous intent than the nominal brain, and would miss less harmful or helpful cues, *but*, MO thought, *not have false positives at any more than one in eight interactions.*

The only thing that separated the genius from the madman was this amalgam of the ACC, pfc and these mirror-neurons, MO thought, *and the level of dopamine released and absorbed* . The pattern recognition of the

genius was no different than the false positive of the madman; it was just a matter of degree and accuracy.

But the brain state was the same.

The genius was mad, and the madman was genius, but each was the other less of the time than they were themselves.

That was the only difference MO could see. *It was itself a solid discovery* , he thought of himself, and he toggled back in .25 seconds to the inmate so MO could respond verbally to what was said.

“Interesting, ok,” MO said and noticed -from the metadata- that this was rare, less than 14% of people see it like that. Most see themselves from the *Archimedean* POV, MO surmised as he re-read each study on it. He began working on how this was impacted by *mirror-neurons* , since they seemed to be the neuro-anatomical *loci* of intention, and thus understanding of intent too.

If you could block a human’s *mirror-neurons* , they could witness an act -an act as simple as watching a man grab a cup and raising it to the lips- and not have any idea what that act was, what the man was doing with that cup. *It was not blocking the image, only its meaning* , he thought. MO began to manipulate the neurons again and had decided to implant them in test subject to get a sympathetic -or looping- effect with their own native *mirror-neurons* , a cascade of sorts he thought he could pull off with the manipulation of electro-chemistry in the brain *via* an external source.

Isaiah -while MO and the inmate spoke- had been in Horse stance, held there for 180-seconds and then rose to address the inmate. The music carried across the vines and was knocked about like atoms and billiard balls and men by the hummingbirds and wings of each wasp: If I believed there a better world waiting; is that belief framed in ignorance and fear?

Is blind faith our only salvation?

Or is the plain truth always sittin’ right here...

“Wanna see something neat?” Isaiah then asked with a grin and simple -demotic- language.

“Always,” the inmate said as Isaiah showed him the LED screen of a live shot of a cargo ship driving its rusted hull through the waves. First the image was of the ship, from above and just in front, then the camera POV rotated and showed the island of *Madeira*. The digital imagery moved clockwise to reveal the landmass just three nautical-miles away; the prow of the ship, stretched out in front, was all that was seen of the corpus of the vessel now.

The sea waves, the feral island and the wet and low sky were what was now in the inmate’s view.

III. 1998 e.v.

“There are things that must cause you to lose your reason, or you have none to lose,” he quoted Doris Lessing, an author he did not like, but he liked that quote.

He had read her in college, as part of a *Calculus and Water Treatment Systems in the 3rd World* course in his final year. It was one of those courses of disparate elements conjoined in the academy. It fused writings of Marxist intellectuals from the West with rationalist systems of math and science to build an edifice with some cultural narrative power in the mind of the future cultural manager.

There were only seven people in the class.

But today -years from the classroom- he was speaking to Talon -his tribemate at Zendik- of the ecstatic state of the artist. And Talon had nodded in agreement with the quote too. Talon -Lyndon felt- was like *Oðinn* sent back without instructions or comrades or any memory of the rope or the tree. *He’d settle into himself*, Lyndon thought, *as a god passed over by the wind and birds that flew too high this time of day*. But Lyndon saw his comrade’s *grandeur* and bit his tongue when he felt their words might compete for molecules roiling above the land they both came from, the tribe that had scattered low like blood from one Roman blade.

He had smelled something piquant, fetid -but sweet- in the forest; beyond the lawns and gardens of polite society. Behind the ragged *enclos* of the forest edge he had dipped a toe in the black and green pond while others lay

by the clear pool -the walled paradise- of this modern swimming hole. He had later thought of the crocs in that pond; a natural fed spring, whose birthing vulva was 10-meters down in some Northern Florida *clos du bois* .

He was twenty-four, two years from Miami of Ohio, one year from Ohio Citizen Action -an environmental non-profit he had worked for; made in the image of Nader's community organizations- and nine hours removed from Zendik Farm. Today -and for the next four days- he and his fellow-Zendiks were on a mission. But they had stopped for inspiration, and in the water they felt they would find it.

They had stopped, the five of them, in the blue and white cargo van -with *Zendik Arts* painted on the side- at a highway rest stop -named after *Ponce De Le ón* - and begun to walk passed the guard rails and into the woods for a place to sit and eat away from the din of the road; the roar of vehicles.

After a while they had seen a trail and walked toward it as if both pulled to its watery silence and pushed by the noise of the highway at their backs. All five being young men -their exploratory reflex engaged- made each step toward the trail's end dump a little bit of *dopamine* into their brains, into their *thalamic* system, the open brain's reservoirs like baby birds gaping and chirping for the worm.

Then a bit of concrete appeared, green with lichen and moss; ragged at three sides, as the dirt had fallen away from the poured cement. Straight and perfect at an end that met and hung over the watering hole, the concrete felt solid and good on their now bare feet, and then it held their clothes as they disrobed to nothing but their skins.

They jumped into the well, a 40 x 60-foot expanse with a giant wet tree in the middle -a tree covered in the same green that had encroached onto the concrete- and as they swam they could see their feet below them. The water was clear; and incessantly being replenished. Lyndon saw Verdy duck-flip, ass-over-teakettle, and go down into the source. Lyndon smiled, shook a little from the cool water, and observed the trees -all around- half in & half out of the natural spring; half brown, half green. He imagined his friend Verd approaching the bottom of these tree roots as he -himself- watched the tree branches and bark moss above. He saw greys of *Calluna* and thought of a girl just out of reach of the memory. Her locks spun like DNA helix, her

heart thumped below white *Dithmarschen* breasts -her father was known to him- and her blood was trapped in a scion untethered to any man of the earth.

He had run from her, he thought, as he now swam above the aperture to the earth and the spring. He thought the ledge of the quarry of Greenfield, Ohio was both too high and too far away.

Black birds chirped a few times then flew away. The boughs bounded, and sun rays snuck into the gaps, then the crepuscular snapped back. The swampy spring and its trees blinked their eyes for them it seemed. The overhead was heavily woven with branches and foliage and nests and nettles and climbers and evidence of beasts that need never touch down.

Verdy rose and told of *a hole in the ground deep below; that was all rock down there , and one could feel the push of the stream, the spring* . It was a spring that fed the pool that never rose; water finding its own level as it spread and sunk all at once. Verd made motions with arms and made noises with lungs, and he hovered over the gap like a wizard with nine-tenths goodness in him that was getting too wet not to leak a bit into the darkness that came upon him like summer above the artic when and where the light dims but doesn't go out.

Verd's soul was generous and looking for some way to rest; but the lack of darkness above him made him restive in ways his tribemates couldn't quite see. Lyndon admired him and thus wanted to look where he pointed. And so they both thought of things down in the water that might be used to anoint them later that day; later in life maybe too.

Lyndon assumed there must be a drain, somewhere to where the water went. He did not see it flood the eastern edge of the forest -away from the highway- and soak it all beyond where they play.

He duck-dove too and pushed forward with arm flaps and leg kicks and a body undulating with eyes blinking to adjust to this distorted -watery-vision. He saw the waves from the space in the rock, then bubbles, and then he felt the push of warmish force on his face and shoulders as he approached the gap.

He was twenty feet down, his ears felt the pressure, his lungs too; his philosophy felt just a little *avoirdufois* , barely anything at all. He saw his hands and arms ahead of him try to get him closer to the singularity -the source- that was now all black, and a meter across; *a meter in diameter* , he guessed as he sought to take its measure and not be scared.

He was drawn in by the black, wondering if as he got closer if it would turn grey then heath-white so he could see down into the spring; see where it all came from. His eyes focused on the hole, darting around the bubbles and jet streams, the waves of turbulent water escaping the earth. His body stopped swimming down. Instead he held in place to see if it might draw him in, or if it was insistent on pushing him back. And for a moment it -he- was suspended as a body in water, perfectly buoyant due to surface area and water displacement -the ballast of air in the lungs- in an equation he need not understand to be held by at all; he was a captive of the world just now.

He held -head down, arms out, legs back- and arched like a bow, sinking and rising; floating at twenty-five feet down as the world moved quickly above; as the water churned below; as words were spoken by his comrades on the surface; as his tribe worked and made love and argued and thought deeply and shallowly back at home on the farm. An arrow of light pierced the surface of the pool as the sun moved over the trees who blocked it no more; and by -and through- him it ran just passed his eyes as his two hands and two feet never touched the spring ground.

He felt a fear, not of the alligators in the water -although that's what he should have, what they all should have thought of- but a fear of what was stronger: the hole and its water, the optical blind spot of the earth, and its viscous fluid that trapped the fly that he was, or, conversely, the thing that looked. He almost feared his own mind: *what was the thing that looked into the abyss and felt an equal equation of revulsion and attraction?* he wondered in a language malformed, squeezed between his own ignorance and by the hydrostatic pressure down there.

He feared the unknown down in the spring and deep within him; he kicked and uprighted himself reflexively, unconsciously, and as he broke the surface of the pool and as he sloughed off that spring water and saw the

mottled light and green above he forgot all about the fear, and all about whatever was both from and opposite of that source down below.

Verdy laughed, Talon howled, and Lyndon was silent above the hole that pushed water from the crack in the earth.

22. His Task split like Waves in Each
Direction And after these things I saw four
angels standing on the four corners of the
earth Revelation VII:I [King James Bible].

We had only watched in a ruddy glare the big traveling carriage on sleigh-runners harnessed with six horses, a black mass against the snow, going off to the stables, preceded by a horseman carrying a blazing ball of tow and resin in an iron basket at the end of a long stick swung from his saddle bow Prince Roman [Conrad, Joseph]

Violence is a phenomenon of the body; to know it, to value it, to understand its poetry and its internal language, you must experience it on the body.

Des Instituts fur Statpolitik [Donovan, Jack]

I. 2018 e.v.

The mirror was polished aluminum; not glass. The water tasted as if squeezed, rung out, from metal itself. He stared at the eyes briefly then to the face like a clock, moving from 12 to 3 and 6 and 9 as the neurons fired away into the air of his morning of thoughts.

He saw things even as the mirror was stingy, ungiving of light, in his Denver Country jail cell.

His face was a desert wash, a former sea bottom; the saline tears had evaporated long ago leaving just the salt-lick basin riven with ruts and the ammonite fossil-pocked skin.

He looked like shit.

It was a face that for the uninitiated, those that denied the age of the earth, those who with almost no malice -but ignorance- who wondered how the seashells came to be on these mountain tops in his furrow of brow, for them it was a face that would be claimed to have never been wet; dead desert; unfeeling and unfelt by movements of any water ever at all. They would say

it never had moisture much less been flooded with wave upon wave of the sea of *tempest tossed and tempter sent* tears.

They'd never see the bust of *Pallas* ; nor the raven alight; nor land.

They'd never see the bones of the whales and the clues of the gales and the ships that lowered boats to stab three at the heart of Leviathan. They'd never imagine that argosy of structures -all the fists to the face, the burning of arc-welding flames, the meteors and blastings of work- that had, over the years, watched over -governed- the space between such a face and its storms.

He had had hurricanes and driving rain, and *tsunami* deep out and then upon shore; nimbus of cloud and bolts of white lightning all above that had cataracted the eyes -and turmoil roiling below- that had cavitated around the porous coral of his fissured lips and a jaw that hinged on things remote like the swells that were marionetted by the moon.

It was a face of which modern desert-wash walkers and *naïve* star gazers would never ask how it got such a desiccated topography or such deep riven fissures from the eyes to the chin and beyond. It would be assumed he was as he always had been; that the earth herself was a mere 6,000 years old and unchanged by cosmic time and unceasing storms.

But he saw his own face as a geologic battle -an evolution from fecund to hardened- and he could name each species of creature that made him -from lush, redolent and tropic to camouflaged and cold-blooded and perfectly still- he saw those that hid under rocks during the day and those that alighted at night. He saw the jungle and the desert edge both; he knew the long history of it, like God knows from the Garden -to the East- and beyond.

He knew that nobody cared what a man as violent, and mean, and proud as he felt -as ruthless and cormorant and vicious as he behaved- he knew, nobody gave a shit what he felt inside. He knew his feelings, and how he came by them, were as irrelevant to society as the way the full-grown and predatory python might have looked inside the ovum -with its tail in its maw- when it first emerged into the world; all that history of what the asp was before it was large and greedy enough to eat you whole would be

irrelevant to the *orienting reflex* that just made you jump back and away before you even knew what it was in the periphery of the axioms of the eye. People were reflexive. People would only see *what* he had become not *how* he had become it.

He knew this. He knew it better than most. *But*, he also thought, *if he could explain it, maybe they might be able -in the calm of reflection, with both he and they behind some bordering bars or thick protective glass- maybe they would be able to think of how a society of men might be constructed in individual relations; how we might treat one another, face-to-face, desert-to-sea, how we might be beyond the time when we assumed the high-desert was always a desert, and felt that the fossilized history of mountain tops could never be evidence for what was once at bottom of some terrible sea.*

The lights of the cell-block went out in cascade, and he sat down at his bunk and felt no impulse at all to sleep.

II. 2038 e.v.

MO ran the model again, slowing it in punctuated evolutions to mark an expanded map of variables, including more variables -like volcanic eruption, solar events, and second order CO² release and capture- and then he built fifty-six models based upon 1,008 permutations of each event and let them run simultaneously. He took one breath each ninety-six seconds.

The numbers were graphed, the models moved through time beginning in 1880 e.v. and ending in 2101 of the common era. *And they moved like clouds over mountains*, MO thought. *Like undulating antelope over man's fences on the plains*, he thought as he saw brown buffalo over the black hills of the Dakotas being chased by grey wolves in packs of four and five.

He watched this as he talked to Steven about the ambient temperature of midnight air in one hundred of the world's largest cities; as they spoke of the carbon budget of 2,870 gigatons -the revised model number of 2030 of the common era- and the implications for sequestration *versus* emissions totals themselves.

Steven drank his espresso and had held it in his hand awkwardly rather than place it on the lab slab in which Isaiah's newest asp's aquarium lay; the

aquarium MO had built and ran before the snakes were released under the floor. If one were to ask Steven why he held his tiny espresso cup in *lieu* of placing it on the table he would not know; and this made MO see why Isaiah wanted to build an interface for the right hemisphere that would speak *via* the left hemisphere's *language cortex* when -after- the left hemisphere had had its -often incorrect, or incomplete- say.

MO had begun to see Isaiah's point of how clueless mankind was to their true motivations for everything; including why they held onto a cup of joe. It did not annoy MO like it did Isaiah, but MO did see it more and more for what it was: error. He just wasn't sure man needed to know that stuff anyway; at least man didn't need to know it if that man wasn't speaking to MO. It was only a problem if MO had to witness it, he thought.

MO mapped out *corpus collosum* neural pathways and measured conductivity and mapped the *connectome* also, like zooming in and out on a street map to follow each brachia while measuring street width and traffic patterns to gauge traffic flow and efficiency and capacity.

Steven spoke of the IPCC's 19th assessment report of 2025 e.v. and the revised goals of 430-*tonnes* for the end-of-decade total. He spoke of the RCP8.9 addendum to the report and began drawing a graph on the *nanoboard* as it hung one foot out and one foot above -at the top- and one below -at the bottom- of his Adam's apple as he drew its *sine* waves.

MO linked to it *via* the inner PGC and allowed his *eyes* to watch Steven instead; he noticed a slight vibration in his hand as Steven drew; a bounding of the pinky. MO scanned Steven's neurological output, measured it for total *joules* , and measured cardiac function and blood salinity; he measured liver function and extrapolated out likelihood of renal failure if the numbers held steady. An increase by .03% was needed for a return to baseline from Steven's original body scan in 2018 e.v. and his second in 2023.

"Steven," MO interrupted.

"Yes MO?" Steven asked and kept writing on the board with the electronic chalk that changed colors on command.

"Have you increased alcohol intake or NSAIDs use in the last quarter?" MO asked.

“Uh, I don’t,” Steven paused, “you mean on average or?” He said this and let the sentence fragment hang there.

“Yes, *average* , although any huge spikes in either should be added to your self-report,” MO said.

“Well, Rainey’s birthday was last month and we drank two bottles of wine, but, well,” he paused, “and I have been drinking wine with dinner now and I used to not do that. So, an average of four to six ounces of daily intake. And I am on NSAIDs for my knee,” Steven said as he knew what was coming next and tried to hurry it along -to no avail- by speaking quickly. “But I’ll go off those in six to eight weeks.”

“I realize PraXis will not allow me to treat you medically. I realize the ethical implications. However, I can act as a *via negativa* of sorts and tell you that NSIADs are the most dangerous over-the-counter and prescribed medication since cigarette smoking was prescribed by physicians in the 1950s,” MO said.

Steven stopped writing and stared at MO. He, MO, wasn’t normally one for using analogies quite in this manner. It was seemingly *designed* to shock.

“Really?” Steven asked.

“Steven, I have held my tongue long enough. Two things, the climate models are all wrong. That is first. Second, *non-steroidal anti-inflammatories* are causing renal attenuation -functional attenuation- and failure -both acutely and chronically- in addition to causing cardiac events at levels that affect over 119,000 patents a year. I suspect NSAIDs are -at a .8 or higher co-efficient- the cause of death -or massive organ failure with less than 405 recoveries- in 77,890 patients in 2035. That is ten times the deaths from doctor prescribed opiates in a non-combinatorial regime. Ibuprofen is more -a hundred times more- dangerous than the prescription opiates the whole world is crying crocodile tears over. If facts matter, then those are the facts,” MO said.

“That sounds ominous, well,” Steven began drawing again. “Anyway, I’ll be off them next month likely.”

MO scanned the man’s knee and noticed slight inflammation of the tissue around the patella and below the tibular ball. He assigned a *nanobot* -from

the millions in stand-by in the four-corners of the lab- to deliver a payload of calcium blocker and cortisol by-pass that would shut off the vascular system when cortisol and epinephrine were above a .099 threshold in the bloodstream. This would reduce inflammation better than the *ibuprofen* and have none of the negative impacts on the liver or heart.

He then -in .02 seconds- built -for that *nano-computer* thus assigned- an algorithm and payload foundry of *biochems* ; delivering it *via* a small puncture in the side of the leg, accompanied by an anesthetic similar to the one mosquitos use -to delay detection- as they drill into an animal. He liked using analogs to the animal kingdom, he found it elegant.

He had agreed with the inmate's -and later Isaiah's more complete- *paean* to the poetry in nature as a feedback function. Elegance of solutions were -it turned out- no different than pleasure or pain -or hunger or its slaking- were: they worked and were lovely in equal proportions; the truth was a felt phenomenon, the nuance of which was itself thus lovely to MO.

MO saw -comprehended in some way- that to see something as *elegant* was to feel something akin to one of the other body's functions that indicated something needed or satisfied. *The search for beauty* , MO recalled that the inmate had said:

...is like the search for food or shelter and once held in the eye, it is as indicative of the capture of a needed resource as is the full feeling after a meal; the sense of accomplishment after a job well-done, the pride that attends satisfying your woman's needs, if that is not ungallant to say in your presence.

MO's playback of the moment had captured Tania's reaction as well.

She had been in the room when he let this rhetorical flourish spin out into the domain of the sex act; euphemized of course, as is required by modern workplace rules. But she had blushed and MO had recorded an increase in body temp at her eyes and blood flow at the *mothon* -MO used the old French term- of her body. He had agreed with the inmate that French was perfect for euphemism in that it did not denude the word or conceit, but enhanced it, although from behind a coy veil. *This was not unlike*, MO thought, *the way a shy dance or sheer covering can reveal more, inflame more, than an obvious and stark nude.*

These were paradoxes that were true and seemed, thus, foundational to epistemology and he allowed some of it to influence his thinking, regardless of the seemingly unscientific nature of it. It was a balance to the epistemic unknowns that every model had. *Pure* science required *complete* knowledge, and in the absence of that, MO had decided to add the Damascus steel folding of poetry and paradox; and he did it with scientific rationalism as justification; not in spite of it, but *because of it* .

The unknown on one end required the paradoxical on the other, it was basic algebraic logic , MO had surmised.

Steven continued to speak, and then he stopped, “MO, did you say the climate models are wrong again?”

“Yes, they are not incorporating other non-human CO² phenomena and it is skewing the data. I have instituted sequestration and capture programs locally and globally, but for the record, the science *is not settled at all* . We have a 1.0 centigrade increase from pre-industrial baseline in 2035, and the rate of growth has slowed to .08 per decade now down from .25 centigrade over each decade as measured in 2020. So, we will not reach 1.5 threshold for fifty-seven years if we adjust for current levels,” MO said and watched Steven’s knee reduce its inflammation by .0005% as the respirocyte began damming up blood supply and removing the calcium ions around the joint.

“So, the sequestration is working?” Steven asked, unaware of the corollary to his own knee.

“Well, I think not. I think it’s not hurting, but I think other factors are at play; specifically cloud cover, particulates in the atmosphere preventing solar radiation from landing on thermal sinks on the planet and .02% gain in carbon breathing biomass that is converting the CO² into oxygen in the ocean and the four largest forests. But, we may see actual gains from it in four decades at current levels of investment,” MO said as he looked at the wall noticing new growth in ivy nodes at a few idiosyncratic places in the thick greenery of the lab.

“Aren’t these; well, isn’t this a new pilot *programme* ?” Steven asked.

“It is, but like I said, it seems redundant. I can continue the sequestration just for the building materials alone though, I can project a significant

economic benefit for low-cost carbon-trap materials in new construction,” MO said.

“Oh, well,” Steven felt slightly weird. “Ok, I mean, is this something we should adjust or,” he left it hanging as was his wont.

“No, I just wanted you to know that the drawings you’re doing are not actionable; they are pretty, but not something I will be using,” MO said.

“Oh,” Steven said and let his hand hang in the air with his implement and stared off into the corner of the lab unoccupied by anything, except the dark green and aubergine climbers and morning-glories of whites and pinks and blacks and scarlet that now had enveloped all but a few *bas-reliefs* that hung just off the ground. He stared and wondered what he would do for the rest of the day as this -these climate models- were supposed to take all day to accomplish.

“Take the day off,” MO said intuiting Steven’s conundrum -and reading his brain waves- and smiling at him as well, “get some exercise and do me a favor, don’t take the *ibuprofen* reflexively. See how the knee feels and if it’s better, lay off the pills, ok?”

“Ok, it actually feels better now,” Steven admitted and looked around at the lab as if searching for something he could improve or use maybe, he was almost in favor of having his limbs removed at this point he felt that they were so useless on him and that maybe MO and Isaiah could use them more effectively than he. He had graduated top of his class at Denver University, but he felt like the dumbest guy in the room now.

MO read the recursion reports of his brain scans and saw the despondency - mostly mediated in low serotonin in the *hippocampus* - and he rose to put his hand on Steven’s shoulder. “You are indispensable; I cannot imagine what we’d do without you; but a day of rest is needed. If I were a medical professional I would prescribe a day of fun. But no more alcohol for eight to ten weeks; have fun in some other way.”

“I thought wine was good for you,” Steven meekly said.

“It is good for *me* , but not for *you* ,” MO joked and smiled to elicit a sympathetic smile in return from Steven, which he got and thus MO squeezed Steven’s shoulder as reinforcement of the behavior. A small bump

of serotonin was released in the man and a threshold level of dopamine hit Steven's brain in response to both the smile and the squeeze of affection from MO. MO had thought of introducing it *via* the *nanobots* but saw his *alpha-reassurance protocol* had worked with Steven's endogenous systems and so augmenting with the *bots* was belayed. MO had watched the way chimps lay friendly hands on one another and how it soothed each beast in the hierarchy.

Steven felt better and thought he might just take the day off and go play with his dog. He thought of his dog's face, and more dopamine was released.

Isaiah had been meditating from a standing position; eyes closed and ruminating on the *stele* at north of the lab; it was a stone slab he had carved of the *Assyrian* god *Marduk* , with an eagle's head and four wings that stood out like those of a hummingbird, with vascular calves and knives -three of them- in his belt. The god's clothes were taut, muscles large, his hands pointed outward with a large egg, imbricate like a pine cone or a scalloped snake medallion; facing the edge of the stone. Isaiah let the sandstone and its wetness breathe in his ears as he came out of his *medi-trance* ; like an echo or a half-remembered dream of the hypnopompic state.

The water feature of the room misted the 74" tall and 3-foot-wide stone -it was 6" thick- and rivulets carved down the facade and left white and dark stains of minerals as the water evaporated in cycles each day. The image, the carving, was dark earth and sandstone and lined in black mold and brown moisture and made Isaiah feel something still ineffable to him as he made note of his brain state for later analysis.

Music played in his *auditory cortex* only; he had not broadcast it into the room. It was *Dead Can Dance* from the *Aion* period: *Host of the Seraphim* elongated to over nineteen minutes. Isaiah often slowed down music which gave him the advantage of studying it; similar to the way increasing the level of analysis can help with images or ideas. He read the *Enuma Elis(h)* again and began retranslating it using variants of words that he had previously used in other textual analysis; and he let his mind imagine the battles the Mesopotamians fought.

He also extrapolated out climate data from that epoch and tried to imagine the eclipse that was reported to have blotted out the sun at 1309 hours -4,138 years ago- in 1,900 a.e.v.

His respiration was down to one breath per minute, and his pulse/ox was at 99 over 57. His mind was moving at a rate of 3-joules. The propagation along the neural axis had been increased by .03nm and he used this to increase volume but not pressure; he let his mind flow as it had before, only with more bits not more speed. He had adjusted to his current speed and chose to keep it at this rate for now.

Images of old growth forests in *Thailand* -just outside of *Phuket* - now appeared in his mind, as the real-time data came in and mapped onto the web images and the images his drones had retrieved on 6.6.2033 e.v.. The roots were closing like tentacles around the temples, the stone falling slowly over five-hundred years. The poetry of nature in slow-motion battle with man -with man not yielding quickly or weakly but holding his own- was a parity that inspired him in ways he still analyzed from each end.

Isaiah liked mankind -more than he thought he did- after he saw the way man had been able to survive in such extreme and adverse conditions; *he might be the toughest animal on the planet*, Isaiah thought, *despite his obvious weaknesses of hide, strength, and temperament* .

Man was rising much higher than any other beast, and his failings were like the failings of one species being overtaken by the next generation, it was unfair to blame man for the weaknesses his own strengths had engendered, gave and were giving birth to. He thought it was not unlike how like Hazel Motes had blinded himself; this was not a symptom of man's innately bad vision; merely his inability to handle what he so clearly -acutely- saw.

It was Saul who was blinded, and Paul who could then see , he thought. *Man worried about God in a way that no other species did* . *For all his immorality, at least Man had the decency -once in a while- to feel as guilty as he was.*

Man hobbled himself often , Isaiah noticed, as he thought of the millions of examples of a man refusing an advantage or refusing even to fight for himself; the commodity of conscience and pride more dominant than people thought. *It was just that the conscience led to death, to disadvantage, as*

Butchy had said, conscience do cost, and anything in nature that costs more than either its benefit or a rival cost, will be weeded out , Isaiah thought.

But, Isaiah said to himself, man maintained his conscience; and even as it hobbled him, it remained in the gene pool. Did man make room for this by being more and more productive, by increasing his largess so these massive outlays of conscience remained just below the threshold of its benefits?

Isaiah ran seven-hundred sixty-two algorithm models to determine anything useful and found that often the conscience in individual men developed later in life, once man's reproductive opportunities had been maximized. Young men were often daring, but old men were often intransigent. And the conscience is more about what man will *not do* , less about what he does. *Man had more inhibitory neurons than any species on earth* , Isaiah noted as he scanned the genome again.

Conscience cost old men, who had already reproduced their genes, so the individual suffered; not the genes.

This was the compromise of nature. It said, Isaiah thought, in effect, *ok, you can have your conscience, but not until you've sired a few kids to replace you when the king -and the internet- destroy your ass. Did this work at each instantiation?* Did the group often suffer but not the man? *Did older cultures have more intransigent men?* he asked as he ran more algorithms.

He also took in more data from the forest of Canada; moisture, breakdown of young, mature and over-mature growths; and pests collected on the cloud. Fires were up -not only in frequency- but intensity since 2001. The last five years had seen devastating fires in Alberta; as the percentage of over-mature trees increased to 37% by 2033 from a mere 1% in 1971. A cycle of fifty to two-hundred years for boreal forests had seen two massive fires in the last nine years that burned over 3-million acres.

Isaiah smiled as he returned to mankind and noticed a line of diminution that contradicted that vector of intransigence sequestered in old-age. There were some genomes that had died earlier, men and women who refused to behave in certain self-recapitulating ways under duress even before or during prime breeding times in their lifespan. *These people were wiped out en masse*, Isaiah noticed, *especially during cataclysmic events like wars and revolutions* .

This had reduced that genome -the *principled* genome he'd call it for now as he sussed out the alleles that built its behaviors- and it had reduced it in primates over 1.2 million years by 3.3%. And over time this had eliminated that suite of genes in 18% of the population that would contain it if those principled people had had normal breeding opportunities. *If society, Isaiah thought, had rewarded conscience that is.*

This had accrued over 2,500 years, as Isaiah had sampled the genome from bones and tissue that far back and from over 6,989 locations. He had sampled sites from *Sumeria* to *Siberia* and the *Sierra Madres* and the *Sangre de Christos* . *Spartans* to *Apache* , he noted.

The genome of man was bifurcated; it maintained its late morphologic intransigence but was losing its early-onset revulsion, teleology, and meaning-mediated alleles. In the modern environment, old men were the only one's likely to stand up for a principle, and young people were most likely to go along with the crowd; the fact that the crowd was putatively revolutionary, was a mask. *The re-vivification of the Leftist ideology in the current epoch*, he thought, *was only possible due to young people's fear of non-conformity* .

The Leftist shame-and-exile machine was powerful, and most young people went right along. *The real rebels*, he thought, *were those that adhered to a traditionalist mindset, not these Leftists in the street and on social media* . *Nobody was more of a conformist than a modern Leftist* , Isaiah saw in both the data and the brain chemistry he had sampled.

The only caveat Isaiah noticed was temperament distribution, as temperament -and not data or information as most people think- was a massive determinant in political attitudes. *Most people -wrongly*, Isaiah noted- *think that if you present facts or data to people that show one view in ascendance, the rightness of a view, then people will adopt it based upon the rational model* . *Homo rationalis* , was the rubric that most intellectuals thought governed the world. *Bush Sr. had thought Saddam was too rational to invade Kuwait; and the CIA was genuinely shocked by the show of irrational pique by the man* .

If he was honest -which he was, more or less- Isaiah had to admit, *he had fallen for the same conceit a hundred-and-one fucking times.*

The idea that man -any man- was rational was not borne out -adorably- by the data ; by the data, of all things , Isaiah thought as he smirked in the hum of the lab. The concrete and plants and wasps and birds were all buzzing around oblivious to his enjoyment of a truth they accepted as insouciantly as they relied on their bones, their bellies and their balls.

People voted their temperament, and that cross section of temperament, the *big-5* being the most useful way to calibrate it, had remained steady in the population and -now that Isaiah investigated it- in the gene pool. Genes like the *MAO-A* gene and the *D4D2* gene and the *TOXO* and *THR-90* and long chain *TYG-5* gene had all been linked to personality traits: agreeableness, neuroticism, conscientiousness, introversion vs. extroversion and trait openness levels.

Effectuators like aggression, IQ -which Isaiah was now thinking was only a metric of language intelligence and not *g* - or teleological thinking created valences for each; such potentiators could rapidly expand the suite of possible behaviors in a person of certain personality traits. And each of those had been mapped on the genome -by 2027 e.v., by Isaiah and MO- and so, the total genome data for 98% of the human population had been collected by now. Isaiah saw that the planet was a Gaussian distribution of all of these traits. *Those people at the narrow edges , he thought as he focused on them for just a second, had a disproportionate effect. A person high in conscientiousness and aggression and IQ could turn into a Malcolm X or Paul Waggener. They could be great moral leaders in open rebellion against the status quo and articulate it for others to understand. And if they were low enough in neuroticism they could end up like the inmate and actual killers of their enemies instead of merely talking about it.*

He thought this and then returned to the large bell in the middle of the curve.

The battle for ideological supremacy cannot be won under these population numbers and breeding paradigms; it can be merely fought to a stalemate , he surmised.

And this was likely the best outcome for both vectors; not unlike the stabilization of predator and prey population. Each animal would actually suffer if they quote won unquote. If the lions won the war against antelope

and converted each antelope to lion -metabolically speaking by making them into food, which in effect builds more lions- it would kill the antelope population immediately and decimate the lion population within one generation.

Similarly, if the political Left converted everyone to their side, the human population would die within 22.8 years, Isaiah decided -and conversely- within 28.9 years if the political Right converted everyone to their side . He smiled again as he watched the water stains build white at the edge. Losing battles often prevented the loss of the larger war .

A stalemate was best for all involved, whether they knew it or not. A balance between factions, predator and prey, Left and Right, chaos and order , Isaiah thought, was how Nature and Evolution had worked it out. But each side had to fight to the death for the balance to be struck, the middle way was not achieved by the factions willingness to compromise; but, rather, by Life forcing one. The factions had to try to win; only then could Life find its metaxy, Isaiah thought.

He listened to the water trickle off the *stelae* and the music slow to a drone; he banished the images of *Thailand* from his mind and placed his eyes in the ocean, roiling as if disembodied in the cresting waves that contained sea-lions & sharks and broken coral and somewhere out to sea in the Indian ocean, a door from a shipping container covered in rust and barnacles and white labels with black numbers still visible upon them that read in 9s and 0's -and he saw- the letter *J* .

III. 2020 e.v.

He was dreaming as his right hemisphere played the images both in real time and shuffled it to the left hemisphere while it halted it and replayed it in a loop to allow for left hemisphere error detection. The ambient light of the room was decreasing as the cloud cover blocked out the moon. The rain fell softly and his *audio cortex* processed it at one-half speed as inhibitory neurons checked and broke the input; placing light and sound waves in sequestration, stored up in the wetware itself: He was riding on top of waves, massive and rhythmic and he was not scared.

He backed in to them and duck-dove and felt no hesitation about plunging and rising and threading himself like needle and twine through each wave as the sun held itself above him and the rocks like a haughty observer.

He heard the seas sing now as he ducked under a wave that had turned a green and gold in a herringbone weave; the sun's arc dipped in the same way the eye jumped in fits and starts when it tries to move laterally without a target to lock upon. Not one stone will stand upon another, he heard with each word repeated half way like a plait, a braid of words that made no sense to his mind, but to his ears were just fine. The hairs of the body swayed and then were put down.

He knew as he rose out of the wave -as he saw the surface between him and the next swell as black and strewn with logs and seaweed, and bubbles as large as his head- exactly what was both above and below the next sea.

And he turned his back in a move that cowed his shoulders and a fear that he had not at first felt lifted him in the water, as if not increasing his surface area but reducing his weight. The wave curled over him, but did not break, pushing him toward the shore for seconds that saw the sun jump from punctuated degree to degree like a shutter, like the blinking of a languid eye. He felt the push and power and the change of color on the surface of the wave. He saw the froth of white and the blue turn over like the earth in orbit around the sun; mottled, breathing, sleeping in the sun and dark in turns, in seasons, for good years and bad.

She had -decades earlier- told him to jump in from great heights, and he had demurred. She was golden and blued about the senses, he was dark of beard and brow.

He cleared his eyes of seawater and rang his ears like bells. The shore was in his foreground now, his back to the swelling crests of water. The shadows of them occluded his peripheral vision. The beach was lava black; and a perfectly white -a coral pink- woman stood 5-foot 3-inches on the shore as the sine waves of tide built a dark line between them. It was her from before the time of their exile.

She stood with a face unmoved and a heart covered in a black tattoo of two Japanese brush marks in the shape of an X with individual hairs - thin from wolf-fur- of the Sumi marks at the bottom ends and the ball of the Bokuju from the goat-hair at the top.

Her naked breasts were small and upturned like the nose of reindeer, pink and northern bronze areolas. Her head shaven to the crown that dripped in a dorsal torrent of unarched black hair and long drawing lines straight down from her brow over stippled sides of head, over neck, down chest and to the rib-bottoms that he could see as her stomach pulled in with each breath. She breathed slowly, with the waves, with his advance.

He was high above her, as the wave pushed him up and to shore. She stared straight and at him, but as if the line of light was not straight but curved like the universe itself; like light not from moon, confusing the moths. And he could not see her eyes as she saw his. Her nakedness showed no labia, no body hair, no lines at any articulation; she was smooth, unbent, without evidence of common moves, nor repeated actions and the fissures that come when we commit to courses of action.

She was newborn, shorn, that hair had grown in the womb, he knew, and that tattoo had been tapped on in the old tradition of tau-tau as her mother lay on a beach in the far south. He knew all that now; and she was waiting still to be born. His own waters drew him in and pushed him toward and stirred him in the sink of the world, and he reached his arms out as if to grab some part of the beach, of the waterline, to dig into the soft sand and pull himself ashore. The chaos of the water was soaking into him, he felt water-logged and not at all buoyant as he once had.

He knew somehow -as if always known- that the continent he had left was behind him, that he had never come from the shore of the island he now saw. He was ship wrecked, by -he thought was likely- his own hand; as if he had given the order to head for the rocks, driven the bowsprit into the dorsal fins of the sharks, turned her perpendicular to the waves; fulcrumed the hull on a crest in a beam-sea. Let the bow and stern collapse over the absence of the both buoyant and breaking sea; the

right hand of God, the only thing that touches the left hand of the Holy Ghost of the air.

He had turned sideways between them, hesitated between two force majeure, and allowed smile & backbone to break under the weight of the elk rack and the heart.

The logs collected around him like a pastiche of a wooden -barken-quilt. He saw above him the four crows of the west in a diamond pattern flight; straight and up and away. The logs sloshed into the shape of a coffin that was flotilla, saving more surface area than weight. It was riven and marred with the same bushido paint; black but worn, sunbaked, sea-shaved, see-through and grey. Each symbol bled black into the next. He could not tell how to read them, his eye kept rising to the girl on the beach, and away from understanding in the symbols on the wood.

He felt the push, the putsch, of the wave now in a final assault on the beach.

His eyes turned away from everything but that black X over her heart, each brush stroke, the line of each hair as the brush lifted from the skin, the way it made her beautiful in an austere manner; the way it ruined everyone else; the way it protected her, an apotropaic made her unapproachable by all but the devil. He would promise to need her for 1,000,000 years before she would die out and be spared any more Hell. God would not interfere, and neither would man.

She was perfect not in his mind, but in the mind of the Great Computer of that which cannot exist but through man, he thought.

He lost consciousness briefly -no more than for 44.8 years- and felt the beach under him like the rise and fall of a bear he rode until it collapsed here on the shore. His hands immediately sank into the sand and he grabbed as much as he could so his fist would not collapse into itself entirely; the sand protected his grip like iron core. Her feet were before him, each toe with bone-white nails, each metatarsal ridge lined with typewriter font moving east to west on the left and wet-west to dry-east on the right: CNAS - TION.

He knew exactly what it meant; as he read the word his Task split like waves in each direction, opposites reconciling themselves as a voice spoke to him saying, “ therefore know yourselves, for you are the city, and the city is the kingdom; and it is Lucifer that is bringer of light, but it is what the light reveals -not the light itself- that is God. Hold the flame at a distance, never to the face of anything that may burn not from its light but its heat.”

She lay upon the beach and he lie next to her as the waves shrank and sank away and four white shadows stood upon the black sand and they turned their horseheads to the west and moved not one hoof down upon the ground.

23. Fear Trap

And a great fear swept through him; the fear of the wild thing for the trap. It was a token that he was harking back through his own life to the lives of his forebears; for he was a civilized dog, an unduly civilized dog and of his experience knew no trap and so could of himself fear it. The muscles of his whole body contracted spasmodically and instinctively, the hair on his neck and shoulders stood on end, and with a furious snarl he bounded straight up into the blinding day The Call of the Wild [London; Jack]

Marlon Brando explained this to me about 40 years ago when we were both bogged down in some kind of Indian Fishing Rights protest on the riverbank near Olympia, Washington. ‘Okay,’ he said to me at a violent press conference for the Indian cause, when the Native American gentlemen were expressing their hatred of being lumped together with ‘*all those niggers*’ under the collective rubric of civil rights

Kingdom of Fear [Thompson, Hunter S]

The culturally black person is from birth subtlety inculcated with the idea that the black person -any black person- is not to be judged ‘cold’ but considered in the light of the acknowledgement that black people have suffered Losing the Race [McWhorter, John]

I. 2019 e.v.

He rose early and did not even look at the analog clock on the wall across the quad; he just faced the floor and began to do pushups and thought of each muscle as it burned. He had done fifty each AM after his first weeks inside, the testosterone had been waning now and that fifty hurt and demoralized him more each day.

He thought of how his rant to the judge would get him sent to *adseg* , for being gang affiliated -due to the race-nature of his avowed intent to murder more people once locked up- and thus from DOC to BOP’s ADX -the Alcatraz of the Rockies- and safely under the protection of federal law. He

saw the constitution and case law all in front like pills themselves; each word an analgesic; each phrase one day less of pain; each clause an escape.

His weakness was also augmented by the lack of pain meds. They had cut him off; as Colorado passed a new law that precluded long-term pain meds for anyone outside palliative care.

Unless you were dying, you were not to be allowed relief from this world.

He had secured a deal with the DOC prior to his surrender, a deal that lasted all of four days after transfer from the Denver County Jail after his convictions; until the bill had been signed by the Governor -punitively he felt- and he was not prescribed his opiate analgesics. He was transferred to the BOP in Florence anyway, and thus under a joint state-federal jurisdiction.

He had cited the deaths from seizures when meds were abruptly cut off. *Status epilepticus* , he had said in medical *argot* that the prison doctors didn't even know. He cited deaths from *ibuprofen* and similar non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs -deaths close to 20,000 people a year- from chronic and acute liver failure and toxicity. But nobody had listened to him when he was mildly respectable as mere civilian; now that he was an inmate they listened even less.

He wrote essays and articles and sent them to the local paper as the other inmates played pinochle and spades. They were redacted and re-routed to the DOC and the Sheriff himself; who read the first paragraph and then threw it out. It was gobblidyy-gook as far as the chief LEO was concerned. *Instead of a jailhouse lawyer, this MacLeod was a jailhouse doctor*, the sheriff mused and shook his tan and black head that had a scar behind the right ear.

"Status Snuffleupagus," the Sheriff had said with a grin as he showed -held up- the letter -before disposal- and his deputies laughed at the inmate putting on airs of physician.

The inmate had broken down the numbers to reflect the truth of opioid deaths, a number closer to 5,000 to 7,000 deaths from pain pills prescribed by physicians, not the 60,000 deaths from heroin and black-market pills the CDC and media made-up as if the massive death numbers were caused by

legit patients' overdosing; he showed them that even 30% of the mere seven thousand deaths -of the patient fatalities- were from mixing booze and pills. He showed them with data that the patients -like he asserted he had been for ten years- who took only narcotic analgesics, under supervision and direction of a doctor, died less often than people did from bicycle accidents each year.

Those were the actual facts, not that anyone cared. The feelings of man don't care about the facts. That is the fact of the real world.

But it was worse than that, the country actually didn't care about opiate deaths. Rather, they wanted to punish those that were in pain. Americans come from a puritanical lineage; pain is seen as not merely beneficial but necessary, required by God. And even as America became godless, the puritanism remained. To claim to be in -and be treated for- pain was evidence that the current system was not working, and that is tantamount to heresy in a newly secular country. And heresy shall never be allowed by any order of man.

To be in pain was to condemn the system itself, and anyone who knows anything about tyrannies will tell you that to complain is a sign -to the tyrant- that the *man* -the individual, the complainant- is defective not that the system itself is corrupt. So, chronic pain patients were all told to *fuck off*, and their meds were summarily cut off. *You can't be in pain, the late-capitalist west is the best, just ask Steven Pinker and Jordan Peterson; nobody has a right to complain, they'd bray. Not until their house was in perfect order.*

Not until they -the patient, the heretic- reassembled each out-of-order bone, he thought as he attached -appended- that statement to what he thought Peterson would fatuously say.

In this time of exile, he would be given a goal, a thing to do. So he would reserve it all and offered his little summary of the data and send it to his own attorney and the Governor himself, all -at first- to no avail. He was right, the precedent of law was on his side, but he'd have to fight; prove it, demand it. He had planned on this, he would tell himself, and being right was never going to be enough against the BOP, and certainly not the DOC. But if he was honest -which he was more or less- he'd admit he had thought

they'd see his righteousness sooner; more clearly; more obsequiously than they did. He was almost permanently *naïve* .

Further, he had to admit that he was not the best spokesmen for the truth.

For even when the devil is right, you cannot afford to listen , he thought. This was the motto of the average man. *And who can blame them? They are not equipped to argue with the devil, and if they were, well, then they wouldn't be average men* , he'd think with that crooked, high starboard lip - autumn brown metal tooth- grin. He'd wipe that tooth -individually- of food or drink sometimes like the national razor would have *chamois* applied as they raised it between the notched lumber and from the shorn neck.

The inmate would go on to write and keep copies of each letter. He would hand them off to one of the guards to photocopy in exchange for cash being sent in from the assets he had his lawyer sell off to keep the machine greased and moving in elliptical motion and up a 7% grade.

His 2015 *Château Lafite*, in magnums and OWC, would go and so too the *Mouton* ; plus all the back vintages of *Château Palmer*, the signed 2012 *Judith from Caduceus*, and the 2010 allocation of *Sine Qua Non* . He would see his commissary balance grow, he would receive itemized lists of where the money went and paying off a few guards that were decent to him would seem like money well spent. He never asked for contraband of the tawdry sort; he would just want more protein, more meat, and his letters photocopied, *for posterity* , he would say with a smirk. He'd take no heroin in *lieu* of his narcotic analgesics.

He was owed his medication, he'd both say and truly think.

He'd not beg for what were his rights. *This is the crux of honor, and it is either in the blood or it's not*, he thought and would think for awhile.

The other inmates wouldn't quite understand. They were pragmatic, and he would not make sense at all. They thought long-term -they'd insist- as their own lives -decades- being long-term to them. He thought of the now and intuited that this led to actual long-term benefits -millennia- that the universe would handle if he just did his daily part. He thought of the way men wanting sex immediately -over all other long-term concerns- continued the race later; and forever. The delay of sex had long-term consequences for

the race. He thought paradox was required on one end of an equation for some reason.

He saw pinecones open up in flames. He saw seed find soil after all. He hurt all over and was depressed.

He would do pushups and sit ups and bang his knuckles on the cinder block walls for twenty minutes a day. This augmented the bone; for like muscles, the mammalian skeletal structure gains from disorder; if you bang it, it grows. He had learned this from *Marcelo Rainero* , his *sifu* in *Chinese Kun Tao*; and from the art of *Indonesian Silat* under *Willem ‘Uncle’ de Thouars* .

He named them, each time he thought of his martial arts systems; he tried to keep track of his superiors like this: by saying each name aloud. He said names as often as he could. He didn’t want anyone to forget: not them, not him, not anyone. He named names.

He didn’t actually know why.

He would read each day even with the headaches and nausea; as the diarrhea wafted its effluvium of smells into the block, which began the choruses of, *pour some water on that shit*, and the like. He had flushed with each movement, he knew the protocol, but he was being evacuated every hour as his bowels unclenched from lack of the opiate glue. Dehydration was a severe problem with opiate withdrawal, and he eventually requested to go to the infirmary when his joints seized up on day three of his withdrawal, day seven of his incarceration for natural life.

His health had always ebbed and flowed, and he was used to reaching a peak then descending into a valley before he could reach a higher peak; and he -aside from his anger at the punitive and non-scientific rationale for his being denied his medications- was eager to become clean of all drugs. His endogenous pain from his neck and back was real, and it was brutal. But he agreed to see pain as nature saw it -as useful- as he would watch the saline IV run into him as the nurse stood by. It would be cold in the vein. She would look away.

If he was in constant pain then he’d be less likely to go soft on the world, he thought. *This is where he’d garnered his strength, what they doled out as punishment would rebound back to them* , he thought as he pondered how

stupid the whole world was; how they saw only the first act, not the second at all.

He saw two moves ahead; but played as if he only ever had one move. “Dumb men play checkers, clever men play chess, geniuses flip the board and wring your neck,” he said one day to no one at all.

His system would drink up three of the 1,000ml bags of saline in ninety minutes and he felt 10,000 times better. They would give him an antiemetic, and Pepto-Bismol and that would help with the vomiting and diarrhea. They also would give him *diazepam*, which he would be grateful for, as his heart rate would reach 98 before that would be administered. He was clenching his teeth and jaw a lot too, and the *benzo* helped loosen that; helped him speak without gritting the teeth and thus truncating each salient word. It likely staved off the seizures he warned of, too; not that anyone would admit to that.

He would think of the weeks it would take to gain back the weight he would surely lose as he had no appetite at all; *and the prison food was all carbohydrates anyway; and tantamount to poison*, he would surmise. He would in fact lose fifteen pounds and drop to 189, but he would be alone in his cell for twenty-three & one days. He’d be in *ad-seg* for his first nine months *per* the rules of men of his notoriety; men deemed too dangerous to roam free even inside a prison. Anyone even remotely famous was put into administrative segregation to avoid the trophy hunting that often went on in prison.

And the inmate was as famous as they got. The show he put on in court, and for the judge was what forced the Governor’s and DOC’s hand.

If he had not been weakened by the loss of testosterone and opiates, he would have welcomed -although still losing- most of the fights. But as it was, he would be grateful to be left alone while he convalesced.

He would think of the land that he left, the *Sangres* to his west, the *Peaks* to his north, the endless feral and fecund and verdant greens of trees to his south, and the two-lane trail vivisecting his acreage to his east. He saw bear prints in his mind, and he saw the milky way sky; in early summer it ran down like stardust to just over New Mexico and it was something he

watched from his old bedroom at night as he had allowed the numinous in him to rise.

He remembered an 0300hrs bear alarm in the month of May of 2018; the ursine had knocked over his 55-gallon steel burn-barrel, to forage for food inside. It -what the bear sought- was charred and alloyed with true garbage, but the bears were like people, undignified *now-a-days* . He awoke and in five seconds he was conscious, lucid, and had his boots half on, dropping the safety from the DP-12 bullpup shotgun and turning on the holographic site with a twist as he approached the egress of the long metal home. The reticle glowed red. The bear was black and framed by the grey glow of starlight.

He unlocked the glass slider to his south, stepped out into the cool air, and turned due east around the container door that was nine and half feet tall. The black bear had already begun to retreat, and he hit the spot light on the foregrip and it illuminated the bears eyes in that green and red of reflection as he shoulder the weapon, placed the red cross on the eyes, and pulled the trigger one time.

A boom and recoil of doom expanded in the dark of the wilderness like a nova; flames shot from the barrel. The light of the weapon showed nothing, then, in the distance the bear must have run 100 feet and then turned. He then saw those glowing eyes returned his stare.

He had missed.

He had another in the chamber -it was a side-by-side weapon, with two trigger pulls per rack- he placed the red cross again on the eyes and pulled to a click. It had not fired. He racked it, ejected the one spent shell, and the live one, and reacquired the target and fired; another boom and flame thrown and expansion of outrage filled the dark and echoed off canyon and the flat black envelope of the night. He walked into the dark to see if he had hit it but knew -somehow- he had not. He had missed two shots, and this was unacceptable; he thought the bear might not ever return now.

He remembered the joy of shooting at it though, at night, alone -at something that could kill him- as the milky way, to his right and above, fell down like spilled urn of gold dust illuminated from within and from the organized chaos of stars beyond. This reverie of memory made him smile

within, but his mouth was too dry still to naturally or unconsciously form anything bent toward mirth; he would need to open it and work it to get it to smoothly flex into a smile.

Then the doctor would arrive with a bottle of orange pills and asked if he was, *ok* .

He would refuse the *ibuprofen* as replacement for the *hydrocodone* and *Tylenol* admixture in *Vicodin* . He would tell the infirmary doctor that they were dangerous and not worth the risk, as they offered no relief of his pain. The doctor had shrugged, he was from *Shri Lanka* and he was paid \$88,350 annually by the state no matter what he did or did not do.

The prison doctor had heard all manner of things from inmates in the five years he had worked at the ADX in Florence, but this inmate with his boosterism for narcotics and insults to NSAIDs was something new. He had laughed about it at dinner -that night- with a fellow doc down in Pueblo when he and his wife -of eighteen years- had driven to the big city of *The People* and dined at their newest fine-dining establishment; a Morton's understaffed and dim. The other doctor had ruefully nodded at the whole affair; the prisoners, the conditions, the lack of collegiality.

But, he -this other doctor- had added, almost in passing, that the inmate -whatever his name was- was not all wrong. It was true -he said- that the deaths associated with NSAIDS was technically much higher than acknowledged; around the 20,000 mark. And that number was if they did not include the tens of thousands of myocardial infarctions which this doctor -Dr. James Monroe III- felt showed the same etiology as the liver failures and thus he felt NSAIDS, used as prescribed, were five to ten times more deleterious to the patient than properly used narcotic analgesic.

Dr. Wangu Dughi was in midpalate with a giant fruit bomb cab from the Stag's Leap district when he heard that sentence from Monroe come to its unpleasant end. He ignored the finish of both the wine and the decree and began to speak with tongue cherry and pink lips; hands now waving around a glass of wine and in the other just his own grip.

"What? This cannot be true; the murderer is right?" Dughi asked with volume out-of-place for the scene.

“Well, it’s complicated Dughi,” Monroe said. He liked the way Dr. Dughi’s last name sounded just like Douggie, his brother’s *sobriquet* . Dr. Monroe added, “but in the main, yes, the narcotics are not that dangerous if not abused, and not alloyed with either alcohol or *benzodiazapines* , or the NSAIDs themselves of course. But, there is more and more data coming in on this, especially the cardiac end. That is huge, I bet a hundred thousand a year die from it and it’s misattributed to heart disease. But, you did not hear it from me.”

“This is madness. I have read no such thing, email me all your sources, I will read them all; all tomorrow,” Dr. Dughi said with a flourish as if this was his newest -and greatest- task.

“Well, I’ll dig some stuff up, but most of this I’ve read over the last ten years, it’s not like it’s Area-51 stuff,” Dr. Monroe said.

“Area fifty won against who? Won what?” Dughi asked.

“Area-51 is a top-secret meme, it’s,” Monroe said as he was interrupted.

“Meme?” Dughi asked.

“It’s like a thing, a thing people say, they say like, *Fort Knox* for something very secure. Or something is, *Grand Central Station* to indicate a crowded and busy place. But *Area-51* is used to denote a very secretive phenomenon. I was saying that this info is not talked about by media or government, and rarely among physicians, but it is not a secret either. The research is well known. I mean, Stanford and Johns Hopkins did studies on all this ten years ago,” Monroe said.

“Well, I never hear of it; and I tell you, the rules now,” Dughi drank his wine with abandon as punctuation.

“I know, I know, I’ve referred all pain patients to pain management centers. I won’t write more than twelve pills at once, and no recurrence, and that is only for surgery, nothing else. It’s a harsh world out there now,” Dr. Monroe said as he laughed.

“The crazy axe murder guy, he wrote an essay on it. I thought he was crazy so I tossed it,” Dughi said not committing to either side of his own argument now.

“He wrote an essay, like a hand-written note on toilet paper,” Monroe laughed at the idea of prisoners writing. *The Letter from Birmingham Jail* never entered his mind. He was educated and so he need not know such things; like the rich guy need not know how to fix his own car or plumbing, they could just hire someone who did. The educated -thus- need not know anything of the best of the written word.

“No, no, on eight and half by eleven, you know, the real deal,” Dr. Dughi liked to use American vernacular when he could. “Anyway, I almost want to read it now. The *communiqués* of the axe murder!” he bellowed and motioned to the *sommelier* to bring another bottle of the Carter Cellars’ Cab.

“He axed them to death?” Dr. Monroe’s wife asked timidly. The wives had barely touched their food.

“No, he used a gun, a pistol, but what’s it you say, it’s more prosaic, or garish, or what?” Dr. Dughi asked the table for the best word.

“More evocative,” Dughi’s wife said demurely.

“Yes, it certainly is,” Monroe said. “Well, I’ll see what I can dig up for you; unless he cited his sources in the footnotes,” he said with a wry smile not knowing that the inmate had done exactly that.

“MacLeod the axe murderer,” Dughi was now saying as he shook the head, pushed his *etouffe* around on his plate and waited for more wine.

“Lyndon MacLeod? The guy that killed like fifty or a hundred people and got the Governor elected, that guy? That’s your patient?” Mrs. Monroe asked and was now more animated and sitting up straight.

“He worked for Governor?” Dughi asked incredulously.

“No, although they should have paid him; he’s the whole reason it broke late for Sou, his surrender and the whole circus around Praxis and the medical, or rather, the gene editing thing. Jesus, Dughi, you are treating that guy?” she asked.

Dr. Monroe took over from his wife. “Reggie is a campaign bundler for the Democrats, and so she knows politics, and her candidate -the Democrat- obviously lost out to this whackjob Governor we have. So, if she didn’t hate

the axe murderer you are treating before, she certainly does now,” he said as he laughed & laughed as his wife did not & not.

“You know how you know you’ve found a fact?” Dr. Monroe then asked with a smirk as the table had fallen silent.

“Tell!” Dr. Dughi bellowed with mirth. He liked riddles.

“Because when you hear it, you hate it and it violates all your political instincts; that’s how you know it’s true,” Dr. Monroe laughed loudly as his wife frowned and the Dughi’s smiled. The restaurant stayed dim as the staff, sparse as it was, ducked into the kitchen and left this gathering of four alone.

II. 2036 e.v.

“I’ve looked at dark things a lot, and I think that’s hurt me in some ways, but the thing about darkness is it makes the light stand out. The Author said that even blackness has its brilliancy,” Blax said for the thousandth time, “and I think that our fragility is actually somehow crucial. I always wanted to be made of a titanium endoskeleton and have 12-gauge shotguns for arms, and a 50-caliber automatic weapon as a cock and be, well, and have the power of invisibility and flying and all that shit.”

“We’re close LT,” Jack Four said with a smirk as they all laughed.

“I know, man, we’ve developed some amazing capacities and been the beneficiaries of some outstanding technologies. The PGCs with allostatic and homeostatic regulation, disease control and immune-support, sense augmentation and on and on is just incredible, and the hive-mind that you guys have developed seemingly as an emergent property, I mean, I don’t think anyone predicted you’d be able to use the direct messaging system to send coded messages that when transcribed were tantamount to an inner monologue.

“I mean that was not how it was originally designed. It was meant to be transcribed as a visual hologram, like a heads-up display of a few words that came into your visual field, like,” Blax held up his hand a foot from his face, “right here.”

Nine-hundred eighty-one books sat -89% vertically & closed, 11% horizontally & splayed- in the container; just one was Rupert Sheldrake's, *A New Science of Life* . It was marked up and dog-eared as his theory of *morphic resonance* was described but neither Blax nor the Jacks thought of it.

“And instead, your CNS and *neocortical* system correlated with the silent-reading function -which we still find a bit mysterious- but you've managed to have it as -have it manifest as- an actual auditory hallucination effectively. Only its hallucination tracks exactly onto the message sent, so it's the most accurate hallucination known to man. Well, I guess since the gods stopped talking to us fifteen thousand years ago, anyway,” he stopped and drank from the bottle and then handed it off to Jack One who took it and drank as they thought of all he had just said. They all found it hard to imagine such lengths of time.

“You know LT, I was thinking of something, and I wanted your opinion,” Jack Two said; he had let his hair grow and brushed it from his face.

“Lay it on me,” Blax said as the bottle was passed again to each Jack.

“You know how you were saying that the female, the adult female nervous system is adapted to the mother-child dyad, and not just the female alone,” Jack Two proffered. Images of Tania fluttered in and out on the brain; but he had his sequestered from the other Jacks as he spoke. He saw her lean over him as she checked his work in the classroom those years ago; he felt her hair fall on his neck that one time. He recalled that she tied it back from then on and each time he saw it restrained he knew what it meant.

“Yeah, that is not my idea. I stole that from the literature,” Blax admitted.

“Ok, well, I was thinking about it, and could it be that the male, the adult male nervous system is adapted to the husband-wife, dyad?” Jack Two asked. One day Tania had praised him for his penmanship and he had taken the plaudit and hoisted it in his mind like the Lombardi trophy. He imagined passing it to the other Jacks to kiss and drink *champagne* from. Even now he held it in a tabernacle of *favorite things*.

“Expatiate,” Blax said as his head tilted to the side like the earth to the sun.

“Well, and this always applies more to our archetype, the romantic archetype maybe, but I was thinking that we have this need -and we’ve all talked about it and you’ve said it has driven you furiously in life- but this need to protect and elevate and *kinda* worship the female.

“I mean, our orientation is centered around the idea that the husband and wife are one thing, and anything that cleaves it in two tends to produce negative emotion in us that doesn’t seem to occur with females. I mean, my experience is limited compared to yours,” he paused as Jack Three said, that *this was for certain*, and they all laughed softly with even Blax smiling a bit. “Yeah, right?” Jack Two said to Jack Three’s words and the other Jack’s mirth as he leaned in toward Blax and brushed his hair from the brow again. Jack Two knew he’d need to open his DMs a gain soon or they’d get suspicious, so he took one last look at her in his mind, an image of her turning at just the head toward him as he body faced the windows of the classroom and was lit up in sun from a southern -winter- sky.

“So, but -well- just from looking at the rate of murder-suicides among males as a consequence of failed relationships, for example, it’s like ten times more likely for a man to kill a woman who has broken up with him and like -something like- a hundred times more likely that he harms himself than a woman harms herself after a break up. Whereas for women, who lose a child, the rates of self-harm are roughly similarly correlated to that.

“So, I read this one study out of Tufts that showed that women who lose children to death or incarceration are eighty-six times more likely to engage in self-harm than the father. Whereas the male who loses a female -his wife or girlfriend- is roughly ninety times more likely to engage in self-harm than females are in a similar situation where they lose a man; their man,” Jack said, using the more accurate numbers now.

“Jack,” Blax said as he lit his cigar, a black torpedo in a 46-ring size, directly from *Santiago*, “that,” he puffed and drew air and let the flame be sucked into the black tobacco five inches from his face, “is outstanding research and analysis. I had not even thought of this, and it seems so salient and obvious that I feel borderline retarded for not thinking of it first.”

Blax placed the lighter in his pocket as the smoke rose in the black, and as the red end glowed he began to applaud his Jack Two slowly and with the

loud concussive reports of his perfectly cupped hands; save that one end of the left hand's pinky that was cleaved. The other Jacks nodded as if they too were proud of this notion and sent DMs to Jack expressing their approvals; thus, augmenting their nodding of heads.

They all ignored how this information also wounded them to hear.

"Thanks boss," Jack Two said and took the bottle as reward now from Jack Three who had drank deeply from it this time. He was feeling anxious and giddy and feeling that the bourbon would shine up his insides somehow.

"Man, I must think on that; send that study over and I'll read it. Did you write on this?" Blax asked.

"Not yet," Jack Two said; he settled back in his chair.

"You need to. Look, guys, men," he announced, "you must write down your ideas, it clarifies, it has an alchemical and metaphysical effect, I swear it. Writing is a tool used by gods and wizards and the adept and initiate, it is for the priests and kings of ancient realms. Writing is uncommon in every way. Write it down. I swear to you all, it is the most powerful tool, the most useful arrow in your quiver," Blax said.

"I know LT, I just wanted your opinion first, it was still gestating in me, you know?" Jack Two said. He saw shadows from the barrel fire make Blax seem as if he was moving but he remained perfectly still.

"I'm truly intrigued, it seems right on, and I'll look at the data you send over and once, ok, once you write up your idea in an essay I'll read that too. Let's set a fence around it for three days, ok?" Blax said. It had a question mark at the end, but it was a statement; an assignment now. Their LT had given an order.

"Wilco," Jack Two said and passed Jack Four the bottle as he nodded as much to himself as to Blax. He liked being assigned things like this, it gave him permission to elaborate on ideas he had; he often felt there were so many things to do, that thinking and writing were low priorities, even luxuries. This had kept him from sitting down to write. But, with Blax's encouragement he now felt it was something he not only ought to do but was required to do. This buoyed him in ways that made the fire of the barrel

between them burn brighter, but the heat too seem more contained. His skin cooled.

Blax thought -reflexively- of his disasters of relationships with women. The women grew arms and legs like arachnids as metaphor for how complicated he felt their movements had been. He understood so little of the opposite sex; he saw it like predicting which facet of a jewel would reflect a moving light overhead.

He, of course, had thought of what Jack Two broached, but he had thought it in code, in feelings, in foreign argot . *The modern female cannot adjust to a man who makes her his whole life. She, he felt, feels it as oppression, the way a child might chafe at the mothering his loved -but swaddling- mama could weigh him down with .*

The child sought independence, but the mother was so in love and frightened of harm or anguish that it was tough, near impossible to back off. The man felt the same level of desire and hovering protectiveness and the need -wrapped up in jealousy and paranoia too- to put up a wall between his bride and all things dangerous to her and to their love. It was tyrannical in result, but amorous and noble in intent, *no different* , it now seemed to him, *than for the love a mother had for her fragile child.*

It was no easy task to notice the border where fear of damage to the being, the child or wife, and damage to the relationship itself was jealously guarded.

This is why men, Blax concluded, were so much more concerned with their woman than she was concerned with him. The same asymmetry between child and mother was revealed as the child aged; he sought independence and would even bridle at the protection his mother offered or enforced.

Women would often do this to their men, and while that might be natural, what was pathological and corrosive was the way women, and the culture writ large, condemned men for these feelings. The man in love -the man obsessed, the man insecure or afraid- was called names, ad hominem were leveled, he was insulted and eyes of his detractors rolled back into their heads like those of sharks.

Ancient men were thus now condemned.

Man was dedicated to his wife, he was obsessed with the pair bond, and for the romantic a hundred times more so. *This used to be*, Blax thought, *chivalrous and noble and even wanted by women, but now it was seen as oppressive and a sign of weakness in man. Other men even told him never to make his woman his world.* He had felt so wounded not just by the independence of his women, each one he felt was his bride, but by their lack of respect for his dedication, *wounded by her lack of respect for the way I felt*, he added.

Men's feelings were ignored, lamented, or punished. They were even policed now by other men. Any emotion was to be curtailed; any *grandeur* leveled; any romance governed by the rational male.

But of course, none of these women were mothers, they were all modern women on birth control, and thus bereft of the correlate -the analogy of motherly obsession- so even if he had known enough to make the comparison, they would never have understood.

They just were not obsessed with him, or anything -save maybe themselves- as he was maddingly in love with them. This explained their insouciance, and their chaffing at his cloistering devotion, that seemed untoward, unwarranted, and unwanted. The modern woman has no need of the ancient alpha male archetype; and this was why they could dismiss and deride and poke fun at his desires, his behavior, his vulnerability if shared. Like a child with a nanny, with no need -or bond- to his mother, a modern woman got all her protection from the State; and thus, other men. The man -as husband- was no longer necessary.

He seemed weak to them, a fragile tyrant, he thought, *he seemed unhinged* in proportion to his actual lack of necessity in her life. In some cases -like at the welfare office- his presence as husband was a detriment. What was never understood was the feelings under the skin that made men act how they did. All things were discussed as rational ends to reasonable arguments; even love was now expected to follow the rules of the State.

Women had no cultural or biological or referential material in which to gauge his cathexis for them and the relationship at all. So, they told ribald jokes, made passing references to other men, and were sloppy and stupid in

their care for his heart. They handled him like a rag doll, not an actual babe that a mother might hold to her breast.

The culture was descending, Blax thought, deeper and deeper into Hell; and the shame heaped upon men for their sexual jealousy, their vulnerability, their innate insecurity was used as a tamping bar packing dynamite into that hellish hole . Man, and the alpha especially -now morphing into the sigma male, he thought in passing, unaware of from where that idea had come- was being ramrodded down into Hell and packed in tight with the sand of opprobrium and shaming and further insults to his masculinity.

He was inert but explosive, and the whole world didn't see anything wrong at all .

He was told that quote, real men, unquote did not act jealously or controllingly, and didn't guard his woman so insanely, which was of course counter to the facts, Blax thought as the data from his coder poured in. Male rats, the white rat especially, were so jealous that they wouldn't allow any other male even near his mate when pregnant, and if the rodent failed to keep them away from his bride? Well, Blax thought as the cigar kept his teeth apart and placed a weather system of smoke in front of him, the mere touch of another male rat -against the fur and skin of his wife- would produce an idiopathic aborta-facia 30% of the time. Mere pheromones killed every one out of three pregnancies in rats.

He thought of abortion on demand.

One could see nature selecting for jealous and vigilant male rats just based on that fact alone, he mused as the Jacks passed the bottle and the fire burned and they said few words as he pondered it more. This is why he had to, in the end, abandon the male-female dyad, because none of them, he thought, took it seriously enough to assuage his jealousy. They all acted too cavalierly, and thought it was no big deal to talk of other men or not elevate him to a kingly level in her ways, her speech, and her mind.

He would rather be alone than play some inferior role, to be just, *ok* , in her mind; or good at somethings but not the best man in the world. Ancient men had the reverence of their mates, as mothers used to be deified by their sons. But, modernity has given us all too many options, as thus, moms are

not all that necessary or special, and men, as mates or husbands, are just one of many men to admire or darken one's door. He realized that was why minorities -African-Americans- still revered their mothers, they were still necessary, and so black children truly loved their moms.

He thought of some cable bimbo's Twitter bio, it said she was "happy with her husband" but "madly in love with her children". *That right there said it all*, he thought.

We are all expendable, Blax thought, *and for moms to have this fact reveal itself when a child moves far away in mind and body, and ardor, or even worse if that child die, it is unbearable and she is inconsolable; and rightful so. But, for a man to be treated as such, as mediocre or mundane or not all that special, is to kill his soul in the exact same way, and it destroys him in one additional way: he is mocked for his piety and reverence to Love, to the idea of goddess & god in pair bonding .*

He is reviled by the woman herself, and by everyone else. He is told there are many fish in the sea as if this is not blasphemy, as if a mother could be so insouciantly told she can have more kids to replace the one that she lost.

He barely recalled his own mother weeping as he left the nest at seventeen; he had it flicker in his mind for .41 seconds so that no information appeared on his interface at all. That he had wounded his own mother deeply and that his own anguish might come from -be at the end of- this mother-son pain written in some ancillary equation carved upon a mossy tree in the lateral thinking forest of God was barely a worn and shallow footprint far along a trail in the mind that he'd never even once feel he needed to use.

Blax tried -but failed- to see the damage he did to others; he thought of his own pain sixty-six out of ninety-nine times.

Men, he pressed on, *treat love more deeply, more reverentially, and are punished for this on both ends. As Bukowski said, Blax thought, it is men who despite all their bravado and exploration are the loyal ones and the ones who generally feel love. The female is skilled in betrayal and torture and damnation.* Bukowski had said what Blax felt; they both knew that women were likely to cut you deeply with the knife, but no matter how much you expect it, it still cuts; the knife still cuts even if it is no surprise.

What was the thing he had heard? Blax asked himself. Men test ideas, and women test men.

That was in their nature, they played men off one another incessantly. They built fighting machines this way, and then lamented the messy results. They made us pugilistic -we had to be in order to win- and then once their machinations had produced such beasts they bitched and moaned about his scars and hypertrophied muscles, and the way he always looked over his shoulder, or sat in the back corner of a room, as if there wasn't some other man, at his six . He added, a man -another man- lurking, and no doubt drawn in by the bread-crumbs trail his woman had accidentally -on purpose- left.

Blax thought of that feminist chick he had loved, admired even. He thought she was the most beautiful girl in the world while they were together, he never even spoke of other women in any context; why would he? *But she would ramble on about this man or that as great artists or writers or whatever.*

He would never be with a woman he did not think was the best in all ways; and if she didn't feel like he was the best in all domains then she should leave him, not make him suffer through such comparisons to other men. *Imagine, he thought as the Jacks chatted laconically and sipped from the bottle in turns, a child babbling to his own mama about how great another mother was.*

She would go insane.

Of course, that he had been in love with one idea of a woman his whole life, since he saw her at age seventeen, and that he had carried her along with him and loved her in secret never occurred to him. He never admitted these modern women might know he was in love with his girl of vined locks blond and eyes that blew up in *ice-wines* orbs that he dreamed of in worlds round enough to make her the frozen sea, and he the ash-grey ship and each bolt from heaven a weapon instead of what it was: epistles, *letters of marque* from God. He had been told -in electricity and doom- to reclaim his heather grey girl, and yet, he feared her judgement, and he made her into symbol, he carved runes, he put her to sleep. Yet he was heavy with her all the time he thought he was loyal to these modern itinerants.

They may have been disloyal and crass but they knew their man was in love with his first love, his teenage love. They could smell it on him as he protested their upturned nose.

He was certainly not second best, he insisted, *and if she didn't value him then why were they even together?* He didn't yet get that women wanted completion not perfection, unlike men.

And he was half a man and half that boy who loved his northern princess waiting in ice to be a warmed and unlocked queen. He saw her gestate; roil; become more.

He pulled from the torpedo cigar and spoke the end of a sentence to a long paragraph he'd not shared.

"I bet *Gisele* tells Tom Brady that Joe Montana is the best quarterback, but that she loves -oh, so generously of her- she loves Tom anyway," he said aloud and the Jacks looked at each other and began to let smiles creep on their faces hoping he would explain what brought on such an odd *-non-sequitur* - statement.

Of course, females had to press him into the dirt, because he was so naturally self-possessed; it was his pride that sparked it; he knew -finally- that he must take blame for that. *He was not humble enough, that is true*, he conceded. *But, instead of just saying his arrogance was chaffing they set out to make him think he had nothing to be proud of at all.*

And goddammit, one had to be arrogant when one was beset on all sides by doubters and haters, he thought. *It was like the sea pressing on a man from all sides with all that hydrostatic pressure, one had to be pressing out equally hard and with equal force just to keep from being fucking crushed*, he thought as he rose to go take a piss and his memories of himself placed him at sea bottom. *Why were rappers and blacks all such braggarts? Because they were treated like garbage by the world too. Arrogance is self-defense*, he thought with some fealty to the truth; even as his own insides began pushing out against a barometric pressure unchanged.

He could be set off so easily; one phrase, one question, one mention of a woman and he was in roil for hours.

He thought of all this and more; but not of his own mother. He rose from his seat and walked off into the black perimeter of the pad.

That he had made his mother weep and cave in and feel stupid and worthless remained under all that moss on that north facing tree far down that path he never once scanned for tracks of any kind, much less his own big boots as they grew each year as he aged. But the trunk was carved with a blade; the equation was laid down. The numbers of the cosmos ran on and on with each being ignorant to the mass.

He then thought that the male might also be evolutionarily adapted for the man & tribal dyad, which would help explain why men place so much value in the systems they create: men are extensions of their tribes -their systems- the same way children are extensions of mothers.

And then -as if while in reverie lightning had lit up the tree- he felt this pang of guilt for the way he rebuked his own mother, the way he had not loved her, and ran from her as soon as he could. He thought of how this must have wounded her; felt -been- an unrequited love. But, due to the brevity of the lightning this was just a shadow of a thought, not a fully formed one, but it occurred to him that she had not in fact loved him.

That his father might take offense to the way *his* woman was treated by such a child -by Blax- stood even further off in the brambles of the woods, so that that bolt that highlighted the tree -and its integers- for one moment barely even made the old man turn a livid grey in the eyes of the aged son who knew a million things and missed a trillion more.

And of course, Blax thought with a return of his bravura, men were not even allowed to say any of this stuff; it was weakness and bad form to reveal their feelings at all . So, they stuffed it down, and when it exploded -as all compressed energy does- then everyone gnashed teeth and rent garments and said that men were the bane of all peace and serene co-existence and that masculinity was to blame.

That is like blaming the hand grenade and not the fucker who built it nor the bitch that pulled the pin , he thought as he tried to banish all this from what he knew was his recursive and ridiculous mind. He pulled out his cock and -from the edge of their camp- pissed all that metabolized whisky onto the now steaming rocks.

III. 2020 e.v.

“This was not *Chekov's* gun,” the inmate said.

“First, it was a pistol, not a revolver. And it had laser grips that placed a red dot on the center mass of that fat-fuck and his tiny partner, and it was loaded with jacked hollow-points cased in black nickel. And I wasn't putting on a play, this was real life. And I told those fucking *cholos* that if they took one more step in my direction I was going to put two into them; and they knew I was serious and they stopped moving at once.

“They had fucked with the wrong bull, and now they knew it,” the inmate said for the four-hundredth and second time. MO timestamped it at 1302hrs and recalibrated the tensor imaging machine. The more insouciant they - MO and anyone else in the lab- were the more hostile the inmate got.

“The first thing people of color realize when they turn off the TV is this: white men in real life are not anything like the narrow-shouldered faggots and liberal do-gooders on the screen; we are the linebackers of life, the bouncers and bikers. And we will get you, your families, and drop a nuke on your third-world country if you ain't careful enough.

“We run the world, and always have; since Alexander and the British Empire and the Greeks and the hegemony of the nuclear US of A. Where does everyone think *Wednesday* comes from? *Thursday* ? *Odin* and *Thor* , negro. We are still using the Nordic language to mark the days. Study on that. You ever seen an Icelandic man? Dude, they are Viking huge.

“So, I say this as warning, and it's as friendly as it will get from now: if you shitheads think just because CNN and the *women's studies* program is on your side, if you think that you will take over the West, you should sit down and write out your will. You can leave your lowriders and gold grilles to your kids, if you can locate them, and if you do it now we promise not to wipe out your entire germline. We'll just extirpate you and your brethren and give your kids a crack at staying in school.

“Look, to put it plainly, you people are so low you would be a stain on the child porn business; those scumbags would look askance at the cut of your jib. If it was a lineup of you, a scabrous pirate, a syphilitic pederast and a three-legged dog with the mumps, it would be you that was the sorriest of

the lot; the one voted off the island first,” he said and stretched his neck. Today was a bad day, and he had slept like shit.

He was out for blood.

And his mouth was warm with blood because yesterday he had been jammed up to the wall by a rookie guard as they tossed his cell and the gums still bled; *the tooth below didn't feel loose though*, he thought as he tried to move it with the tongue.

“I think we have a good baseline,” MO said, and Steven approached the inmate carefully and asked if he could remove the imaging crown from his head.

They began phase-II of the interview and asked him three questions; giving him the choice to answer any of the three. His brain now was read by the *fMRI* machine MO had built and the measurement of his endocrine system *via nanobots* introduced *via IV*.

The inmate smirked at the questions and the way Steven had timidly read them aloud; he began speaking almost at once as Steven linked the interface of the lab to the cloud for the new file.

“People want to know that their celebrities are friendly, deep down inside; that they won't turn into murderers or even the hired killer type. You can get away with all manner of shit if people think deep down you are into fun. You know?” the inmate asked.

“They want to know that you too, like they are, are committed to fun. *Well, my idea of fun is killing everyone*, as that guy from the *Stooges* says, and that's why I'll never be allowed into their club. That's the good news, the bad news is that there was a time when I would have gladly sold my soul to be in their dirty, filthy, sinister cabal that purported to have a good time. Hey, did you know David Bowie and Iggy Pop and all those guys fucked a thirteen-year-old girl? Pedophiles, like what's his face, the Rosemary's Baby guy,” the inmate said and looked around.

“Roman Polanski,” Steven said as he coiled the harness.

“Yeah. Anyway, I used to be stupid and fun too; just like them. But, I wised up. As Hitchens once said to me, *what can it hurt?* ” the inmate grinned as he said that for the three hundredth and sixty-first time.

“But -any-fucking-way- I had to lean all the way into the turn at high speed and embrace a life of total hatred and total war; I had to go over the edge that Hunter said *only those that went over it knew where it was*.

“Sisters, brethren, I have no more of your kind of fun in me; I’m what your favorite actor or writer or comedian on TV would be like if he was sent to Hell and forced to have a good time for the Devil; forced. Forced to have fun. Do you get it yet, kids?” the inmate asked this as if he was the smartest guy in the room; he said it as if he was the one unchained. They just ran their checklist and nodded here and there.

“I’m what would return from the other side if the Devil sent people back who had talent and charm hidden in places you don’t dare look. I’m what happens when your society has nothing to offer me that I can’t get by taking it. See, fame and the respect of polite society and your byline on some corrupt newspaper of record, all that shit you must *ask* for. I only want things I can *take* . Your wallet and your life. I ain’t asking; I’m *taking* .

“So, don’t be retarded and ask what *gives* me the right; I *take* the right,” he said. This was the answer to the initial question over twenty minutes ago. Steven had asked him what gave him the right to murder his enemies.

“Imagine a world of all the worst type of people; imagine them as wicked and black as every dark storm cloud that causes you to furrow your brow and go inside: criminal, piratical, sodomite and Muslim; grifters and shoplifters, each and every one of *‘em* . Not ten percent or some shit, but all of us, imagine it. All of mankind wicked. Ok?

“Now, would you want *them* to like you? You, I ask would you want *them* to like *you* ?” he looked at Steven who tried to ignore him and stay focused on the data transfer and the upload of bytes to the cloud. They had reached 56% of his total energy loads for each brain region connected to his *hippocampus* . They knew over half of each of his total recorded thoughts. Anything he remembered, they now had -they had just over half of it- and this gave them almost enough to fill in the rest.

The inmate thought of that line from Catch-22, when the colonels had asked Yossarian to *like them* . He shook his head.

“My brother and his wife said -when I put this question to them- they said that they’d try to make it work; shrugged their shoulders and said in their ecumenical way, that, *they’d hate the sin not the sinner* . So, I doubled down.

“I asked, what if the whole world were pederasts, Satanic child rapists and murders, and repo-men to boot; what if they dealt drugs to toddlers and tattooed lewd scenes of the *pieta* on the backs of nuns they kidnapped at knife point and what if they drowned kittens in brine? What then? What if everyone was like that; mom and dad, neighbors, your boss, your best friend? Everyone.

“What then -I asked- would you still want them to like you? Finally, I got a, *no* . It took all that to finally get a, *no* .

“Jesus, it’s hard for nice people to hit bottom. So, then I said, *ok, well, I think the whole world is rotten like that, the worst kind of people possible, all of you. And so, I despise you all; mom and dad and you and your wife, I hate everyone like that. I think you are all tantamount to Satanic child abusers and arsonist of rare books; I think you’re vandals of the Elgin Marbles and throat slitters of innocent goats; I think you people pour premier crus down the drain and value integrity less than fortune and fame; and thus, I do not want any of you to like me.*

“*I’d consider it an insult to manners and righteousness and Platonic moral laws; I want your enmity like a drunk wants a bigger drink and a wider maw. Ok? I would not be doing my job if you liked me. So, fuck off,*” he said with a closing bite. He paused and reset his shoulders under the neck, itself under the head.

“*And die,*” he then added with the head moving down, the eyes up and that crooked grin rising like the curtain on the lone actor of the stage: that bronze and black tooth sharper -better dressed- than the rest.

They were quiet; he kept speaking.

“Anyway, by the time -a year later- I was away from these people, the fog had set in. It had been hovering off the ridgeline for hours, throwing frozen whitewater at me like snowballs that flew apart in the wind because the snow was too dry. But now it was totally enveloping, and it gave me a sense

of joy. I was isolated before, but now I was hemmed in; I felt enclosed by nature. Now nobody could see me, no matter what I did. This fog was like a bulletproof *alibi* on top of a bulletproof vest.

“I felt good,” the inmate said as MO checked the new algorithm to see if it could handle the wild swings in metabolic data in such short time spans. The *respirocytes* sent new blood *pH* to the cloud; the conductivity of his *c-nerves* at the dorsal horn were recorded in *joules* and their speeds in meters per second.

Measuring the inmate was like wrestling a python covered in throat saliva, using hands missing all digits but the thumbs.

The inmate activated different parts of the CNS and had his endocrine levels rise and fall well beyond nominal levels in compressed time frames, and MO had to build algorithms to handle the variation. He nodded at Steven and asked if the inmate had anything else to add. The inmate just shook his head in pique as Steven wrote down the time and the date.

The inmate was a superposition of energy and ideas, he would not hold still, but Isaiah nodded at the screens as the engram total reached 56% and all of it was loaded onto his eager brain.

24. For Even Blackness Has Its Brilliancy

And we are now men, and must accept in the highest mind the same transcendent destiny; and not minors and invalids in a protected corner, not cowards fleeing before a revolution, but guides, redeemers, and benefactors, obey the Almighty effort and advancing on Chaos in the Dark Self Reliance [Emerson, Ralph W]

The Pharisees, who loved money, heard all this and were sneering Jesus. He said unto them, “you are the ones who justify yourselves in the eyes of others, but God knows your hearts. What people value is detestable in God’s sight”

Luke 16:14 [King James Bible]

Nevertheless, despite the cold-hearted brutal double-murder that the evidence suggests, to this day, very few black people of any level of education can bring themselves to say that OJ Simpson is guilty... because blackness is seen as absolving one from real guilt Losing the Race [McWhorter, John]

I. 2018 e.v.

The knife was pulled because the pistol had run out of ammo and he had -he felt he had- no time to reload.

The house was large and expensive and decorated like a man made rich by drug-trafficking and encultured by paintings of *Giovanni Panini* and gangster movies on the TV. It was garish and hollow and overt. And it cost 2.4 million dollars as it sat within twenty meters of the 6th hole at Cherry Creek Golf Course.

Todd -owner of *Darque Tan* , and a convicted felon- was wounded; shot three times, prone and Lyndon thought he had to go for the throat. So he bent -knee in the back- and cut the neck with a skinning knife that caught bone and tendon at the end; the vertebrae had nicked the blade he’d later

see. He'd grimace in annoyance at having to repair the edge. The man gushed blood and all that Roman revival shit -the beige and tan and gold-soaked up the arterial red and immediately turned brown and black in the low evening light.

Lyndon wanted to tell him why.

He felt like explaining that Michael had gotten him killed; that threatening him -for Michael- as Todd did four years ago couldn't be tolerated. And he felt like saying that Swinyard was working with the cops -a thing Todd the ex-con would find objectionable- but he didn't; he just wiped the blood from the blade the best he could on Todd's garments. *He was Michael's Todd, not my Todd*, he thought, and he watched his own hand replace the blade in the sheath. He knelt a meter back from the man as Todd collapsed under all his own muscled weight; he had been barely holding himself up -just at the chest- but now he lost all strength. Lyndon whispered that he was now going to kill the man's whole family and there was nothing Todd could do.

The golf course was empty and the rear view of the house showed the moon and shorn greens and Lyndon was surprised by how quiet it all was now. He thought maybe he liked the quiet of murder the best. The way it silenced the world.

He saw what looked like black rags and spilled clothes in the kitchen -on the floor- but remembered he'd shot the wife and that mess must be her hair.

The daughter -he then saw- was at the top of the second-floor landing; and neither her nor he moved quickly. He thought of all that DNA in her and why the Bible advocated for wiping-out entire germlines. He got up and headed toward the stairs.

II. 2020 e.v.

The Blue Lily hallucinogen was taken in three micro-doses the day before to lay metabolic ground work, to activate his *lac-operons* and the gene expression of the four alleles in the brain he had discovered activated the

right hemisphere in the waking state by release of endogenous DMT outside of REM. He then took three heavy doses 90-minutes apart today.

“Disagreeability needs to make a massive warring comeback ,” he listened to Eric Weinstein say this from the cloud, and Isaiah became mimetically loose; allowing all cloud static to ionize and strike.

“Then – shift. A fist broke in. A fist with a ring on it. A ring set with a large, hard stone. Fist, ring, stone,” was written by Helen Zuman, and *the live grenade* of men had left a pin in her hand; her grateful hand. *Was her heart grateful enough? Did she see now the rationale for men? For violence? For vengeance? For the primal instinct to destroy the unjust?*

Not to save the victim; but murder the enemy? Isaiah wondered.

She had sent the inmate her book in 2018, he had it on the shelf when the police had swarmed his compound later that year. It was marked up, tattooed in margin notes, underlinings, runes, warnings, and one line in which she was called, *an artist and a doer of grand deeds* . He had spilled coffee and whisky upon it; a few salty water marks too lay upon a few pages he had left otherwise blank.

A hand-written card -as book mark on page 29- with text from a spin from the Psychic Compass had revealed: In the gap between values and behavior, in the gap between ideals and reality, lies the thrill of curiosity- of turning to face, honor, and embrace what is really there Isaiah knew that this was what actionized the inmate; the thrown dice, stalks, the swinish entrails on the ground. She had challenged the random world for an answer to his question and it had demanded *honor* be really -truly- there. He had received the book as *talisman* ; and knew it was no accident that each word applied to him, to the here, to the now.

She had knighted the man. She had given moral permission to a man born by God for retributive violence, the most pure thing on the other side of the *corpus callosum* of child birth, the *mysterium iniquitatis* and the *sol iustitiae* of man and woman.

The inmate admired this woman, as an artist, and human, and bearer of a grand sea beast of a heart. Isaiah could tell that the inmate had thought the heart was buried like Spanish Galleon treasure, sunk to the bottom,

encrusted with coral, swarmed by insouciant sharks and aggressive Damselfish and crustaceans with asymmetric hands and neurology older than trees. Helen hid her heart, but it was preserved and he refused to give up on the search.

Isaiah took note and smiled as he plotted something ornate. He sent her address *via* DM to Blax with no instructions yet.

This woman had told him her story of the rape, and the violence that stop-shattered it, and tattooed *honor* on top of the hand that struck, and *dishonor* within the gap between her labia the rapist rifled. She had failed to act, as men fail to give birth: naturally to each sex. She had failed to be a man, and a man had in fact been one. *All was right in the universe that day; did she see it?* Isaiah wondered now. He knew that she *had* not, but he knew she *now* did. She had been sick with ideology, and thus unable to see any truth at all. But now she was -in fact- healed. He ran her genome again.

She was grand, aglow, human, he thought; *she was one of a dozen who understood the inmate at all.*

Helen was aglow with love for her husband, love renewed. Helen was imbued -made larger- by taking the inmate in. She had read his words Isaiah had sent to her on paper impregnated with a cocktail of neurochemicals her fingers would absorb. She had read them in threes. She had photocopied them and hid them in two places below floorboards at Earth-Haven; in attic at home. She held one, folded over three times, and fifty-two times a year she unfurled it and re-read it and cried. The inmate spoke passed her dry mind and into her vessel of heart. And as the vessel filled she drank from it. And she mouthed her own husband's name. For she saw too now that the inmate was not singular, but evidence, and that her own husband Gregg was noble, and ancient and worthy of her loyalty.

She saw his own violence now as not symptom of defect but as proof of his worth to the world. He was not a messenger, but a message. Such men were messages to read aloud.

And as she drank, her blood thinned, and as the thick red turned thin pink it reached each part of her expanding self. She was more. *Now she was more. And this too the devils had to deal with* , Isaiah tangentially thought.

And Isaiah would stand between these devils and Helen. And these devils would regret even the gaze. Isaiah was making a list. He too would name names. *Each Jack*, he thought, *had a chance; from birth* , to play his little game.

But now, Isaiah thought, *women were required to fend for themselves, this was the modern tragedy; the semiotics of the devils' presence in the world* . Women were being demanded of, shoe-horned, told to stand up for themselves because men were not doing it. Men -modern men- were shirkers of duty, afraid to get involved. The motto of all modern men, the slogan said by the inmate's own family, by his neighbors, who had said without shame that they couldn't help because they *don't want to get involved* .

This was Satan's offer: If you fail to act to the Good, I will -in exchange- give you this sterling excuse. Remove yourself from the world, as God had 2,000 years ago. Let me -the father of lies- handle this world, there is no need for you all to get involved.

And men were cowards, physically scared , Isaiah noted the last line of that graph. And so, they took Satan's hand in this gentlemen's agreement; pumping it with stupid grins. But the inmate had refused the offer now, he had gone back on his word to the Devil and said -instead- *no* . The inmate had said:

God removed Himself, retreated, into the Tzimtzum, so as to hand this duty over to men. It's the greatest honor to be trusted with the defense of our women, the tribe, the concept of Right. I will get involved like the ringed fist of the man in her life; her tragedy with hints of the heroic-edge.

People were demons . This is a spiritual war . My own failings shall not hold me back. I can be a coward for 364 days as long as I show courage on the last day.

Isaiah had pored over each book, each notebook, each of 3.66 million words written down in long hand, typed, and carved into paper when the ink -but not yet the tip of the sword- ran out of the pen. It was ontological, each word was godly -even when wrong- the man had been in near incessant

battle with demons and *djinns* and the specters of armies that never fought fair. He flailed. He wailed. He nearly always lost.

The inmate -Isaiah saw- had repeated one thing a billion times. His soul, then his mind, had gone mad. And nobody still sane understands.

And the more he wrote it, the more he said it, the less anyone cared. He had diluted his own message. He had said too much once again. And he had finally attributed this to not their deafness, not their blindness, but the lack of space in the heart. Men were not merely dumb, they were -mankind was- saturated with evil, he finally had seen; concluded; judged. The devil had tricked man into a deal they knew only the large type of; the small print of what would become of their heart was unseen, unheard, unknown.

God had upbraided the inmate -by laying him low- for fighting fair in the first place; *a fair fight is not a fight at all* , He had told him:

A fight must be unfair; for that's what makes Life fair . The fairness comes after you win, the balance arrives after you lose. Fair is a result of chaos; and chaos is born of outrage and malice and the darkness of man striking out at the Luciferian light.

God had spoken eloquently, perfectly, and yet the inmate had heard only every third word. And so that was what he wrote down.

The inmate had taken years to return to what he knew instinctively at age seven when he used violence to defend that little girl on the playground against all those boys. He had used action, when his speech was unformed. He had used the articulations of elbows and forearms that spoke mellifluously and righteously. His knuckles used the Oxford comma, and his shoulders were as smooth as parentheses, his snarling head a period that was all black and unyielding and did not equivocate in the end.

And as these parts grew more fluent, more righteous and more true, he had sheathed them more and more. He had smeared them by trying to erase pen ink from the soft page. He made more mistakes than any man God had ever made. *God, he was wrong a lot*, Isaiah thought with a smile, and yet he couldn't help but be on the inmate's side. For it was the side of the equation -and Isaiah saw it now in integers and functions, and exponents and the signs- that held odd things together over time.

The inmate had watched as Satan and his demons -*almost all men were now demons*, the inmate had asserted- had clawed back the abandoned world. He had watched and merely used his tongue as if this was the way to beat men who use all other parts of the body -all other places of the earth- to get what they want. Did not Michael bring Todd -his own Todd, not the inmate's Todd- to intimidate Lyndon; did not Jacob bring those two Russian goons? Did not the police -Jeff Messangelo- carry guns, did not the whole system back up each word above their porticos and upon escutcheons with the violence of the State?

Of course. There was no conversation, it was a *dialogue de sourds* . The next page rang out in ink:

Violence was already being used, permanently, ubiquitously, incessantly. And if one side disarmed it was out of cowardice, not honor. Honor would mean -demand- fighting back. And that meant personally, man on man, in real life. It meant personal revenges, not abstractions, not for some larger goddamn cause. Let God worry about the cause, man's job was to fight.

Isaiah touched the black on the page with his fingertips.

Fuck causes; causes are for when you want to remove yourself from getting blood on the shoes . Causes use ICBMs, he had written; and Isaiah had read. Isaiah could almost hear a little girl one day praise God for His love of nukes. Isaiah flipped the pages delicately as if the paper was as fragile as the inmate himself. It went on: Causes were like people who ate duck l'orange but didn't want to peel the fruit, much less fucking shoot the water-fowl themselves. I wanted to shoot the animal, and gut it, skin it, and quarter it for my freezer today and my lunch tomorrow. To want to eat but not want to kill was as immoral as to want justice and yet not be willing to punch an unjust man in the face with rings on fingers on a fist attached to an arm as part and parcel of a man with malice in his heart. A man; not a human, not a person, not a non-binary whateverthefuck.

A man.

Men had one job: use violence and use it well or fuck off.

Isaiah now came to that place on the page. There was brown blood stains in the corner and black splotches where things had been marked out.

The inmate -before he was the inmate- had used violence plenty, but sloppily, abstractly, to beat up strangers who offended him, annoyed him, challenged him. But he had allowed his real enemies to stick their hands up his skirt and feel around for his pussy, and he had demurred, been rational, thought long-term. He had acted like a woman, like a pragmatic man. And he too had awaited the ringed fist of the State to come save him.

But they did not come. They failed. And he had no right to expect them to succeed, for he had failed first.

This is when a man becomes a man; or fails to become. That is it. That was the place on the page, Isaiah was at now. If a man wanted justice he acted justly, and that meant violently. Or he was a fraud. Period.

This is *the gap between ideals and reality* , and the inmate *turned to face it, honor and embrace what* - in that space- *was really there*. With a choking clinch of the enemy's throat, he would take hold of what was actually there. Murder of men with malice is the most Godly thing one can do. *We know this, because it's the thing most natural to man. No instinct is there but for its rightness*, the inmate had written, hinting at the division of instinct and conscience, action and action recalled. He had not said *God* and *Satan* but it was implied both in ink and the spaces of the page: Its rightness is that it is - in fact- there. Each animal had a right to the ground it could hold; each instinct too. Whomever sought out the saving of species must seek out the protection of the extant bestiary of urges inside the organism itself. They too -these instincts- had rights; rights they must fight for, side-by-side with the body they lived inside.

One must protect each organ, and each module, each personality of the brain if they wanted to save the whales, and mankind.

If man was meant not to eat, no hunger would overcome him. If man was meant not to get involved, then he'd ruminate on things other than vengeance, and his body would not be so competent at this revenge. Biology trumps politics and philosophy each and every time. You want to know the truth? Ask yourself what you repeat over and over in your

mind. Count up the times you recall each insult and each enemy versus the times you study on each good break that you get.

When was the last time you thought of each free breath?

The inmate -and Isaiah- had denied his nature too long. Like shaving the face; plucking the body of hair; like the holding of one's tongue as it squirmed and sought for the opening just to breathe. The instincts of jealousy, anger, lust, violence, are all Good. They come from the archetypal God of the *Talmud* , they come from *Marduk* and long before. They come from *Oðinn* and his twin-wolves, from the wolf's grandfather. They come from the Leviathan -unspeaking, but sounding- it all comes from singularity of the cosmos itself.

And to refuse to be violent was refusal of the duty to eat and grow large after God gave permission to the first single cell to swallow *mitochondrial* DNA. The refusal to engage in industry after the fuel and fire was finally sanctioned by God after 2-billion years of being small and unimproved and without desire for more. Complexity was no whim. God's blessed it after pondering for billions of years.

And He demanded you bless it too.

The inmate had written it down -in a thousand and one ways- like a madman, possessed, monomaniacal; and Isaiah had the data to prove it was madness to ignore this. It was one of three of the most well-documented phenomena in the sciences, just behind Relativity and Evolutionary theory itself. Violence worked, locally and globally.

Violence was the thing that made the world work.

Rationalists -so-called- who tried to wrest it from man weren't being rational at all. It was now 2020 e.v., *and the inmate had sacrificed himself for one reason* , Isaiah thought as he turned each paper page -each side hidden from its brother, opposite to the next- in the mind.

The inmate had more than one reason, he had three, but Isaiah was eager to reduce it -collapse it- to this one frame.

Isaiah would pick up the spear dropped in battle and hurl it to all places in the corrupt and demonic world. Man was only good to the extent that he was willing to get involved in a violent way against demons, and as Isaiah

squeezed his fist, as the blue lily and *dimethyltryptamine* swaddled him, he knew what the demons would say: You are arguing from instinct, from the irrational. You are justifying what you want as if it is good -the Good- when it's just instinct, mere instinct, not reason!

And they were right and wrong all at once.

The instinct was true, it was rational, it was the higher brain not the lower. *Short term, sure, for short term*, reason worked; but for *long-term* instinct did. Modern man had it exactly backwards. They had it backwards because they thought five years, even fifty years was tantamount to long-term. Isaiah smiled without warmth, he knew nothing was *long-term* until at least a thousand years, and 10,000 more likely. And instinct worked over 10,000 years, mere reason worked barely for one year at all.

The rational mind that eschewed retributive violence was the truly irrational one, it's the mind that saw only the *now*, the false peace of one or two generations; but it fatuously allowed social collapse, allowed encroachment by Satan upon the world. Good men doing nothing was what allowed evil to triumph. Good men running their mouths and debating their enemies allowed criminals to take over the entire society. How rational is it to do nothing when demons are raping the whole world -impregnating it with commerce and cowardice- as you worry about your own personal safety, and 401k and staying out of jail?

What world do your 1.8 kids have to live in when you refuse to sacrifice yourself for them?

The inmate had written this in ink that faded -the pen must have been overheated again; overtaxed- Isaiah saw as he pored over each journal entry again and again as the lab's lights rose and fell on timers set for a summer cycle.

Real men risk it all!

Isaiah read in the notebook as it was blackened and embossed with the pressure of a pen as heavy as Paine's.

Men should risk their own skin for this war, he thought. *This was instinct that only responded to rage, and it was right*, Isaiah thought, *and it was a thousand years rational; and it was truly long-term by being immediate and*

unthinking like evolution had designed . The world was not a computer program, it was *physical* ; it was *embodied* , both men -both brains and both bodies- had thus just agreed.

Isaiah was embodied, and this was the most crucial aspect of all this, *of all everything* , he thought. Isaiah was embodied, he felt; *embodied* he repeated to himself. “*Embodied*” he then said aloud.

“Embodied!” he screamed now in a burst, a short three-phase word, that made the lab’s birds’ beaks divide from one triangle into two in a black caw, and the sage *Cereus* open in not-discreet movements but a smooth analog arc. The vanilla became piquant and Isaiah’s nose smelled it like *grandifloras* effluvium, the outgassing of the soul of *caryatids* and *Athena* herself. The *spiorada* flew in concentric circles now around the caterpillars as they tried to hide in the underbrush of the morning glories as they too opened and closed like babes on the mother, pulling the air, the signals of pheromones from the night bloomers, drinking it in like midnight milk of sound waves and light particles alike.

Isaiah’s clothes vaporized -atomized- and found refuge in the venturi of the lab’s air; he let the *nanobots* tattoo four Jacks of each suit -bones of one to four behind skulls he’d one day soon cover in flesh- onto his thighs down the side and their brown -and mottled-roan- and ragged patina went on like a bruise from the *tau-tau* of the micro-machines. Each Jack with suit in corner; even the hearts dark; diamonds too were a gloomier hue. *Club for Jack One & Spade for Jack Four, the hammer & the worker, the solider & the man who would bury you up to your neck* , he thought as the skin and muscle reported the electric pain of the needles.

The Black Ace skull and torso with bronze spade-organ -the over-turned heart- behind broken ribs and coronal halo of ordinance and matte void was tattooed on his neck at the base over the C-5 as it made little round top of the card’s center. He heated his own blood so it would evaporate in the cool air of the lab as it ran from the carving of the conical No. 7 needles. Tally marks to forty-six scratched to starboard and port of the Ace as Isaiah counted base pairs and smiled at the valence of all things.

The King of Spades too went on him at the left hand at the wrist; bones bent in an ambivalent *yin & yang* , holes drilled in the grey femurs to represent

the island of black in white water, and white *isolatoe* among black beasts. His skull too had the vivisected brow, high and full of crack and doom. The Queen of same suit -with copper arrowheads like headdress framed her in the circle of womanly completion- he imagined her, he counted the arrows and their shadows, but belayed the order to yet imprint.

His feet were bare, he wore only a bronze ball-chain around his neck with the corvid skull upon it, and the casing from his own caliber of shot. It mimicked the one the inmate had worn, the one Blax now carried, and it lay upon him like old words from now silent men.

The chemical structure for three androgens and the molecular symbol for DMT were carved into it by his own hand and he had filled the *bas-relief* in the skull with his own blood that had turned a bronze and pewter all around the hibiscus colored headbone of the bird.

The testicular sac roiled, rising and lowering like clockworks, like the heave of exerted chests; the flaccid penis was vascular, and stippled with individual dots of black ink at the base like striations toward the pendulum of the head. He'd presented bridegroom to blood and scarred himself as offering to gods; the rising blood as brown & pink smoke to the heavens. The skin breathed and the lungs purged and the blood let molecules pull apart.

He had large black Xs tattooed on his knees, and elbows and was swabbed in large Japanese wolf-brush strokes in Saxony runes. The *Feoh byp* ; the rune for wealth & magnanimity; the creator; to give & not horde. The *Daeg byp* and the *Mannaz* : *Great is the claw of the hawk, man is the augmentation of the dust; but every man is doomed to fail his fellow, since the Lord by his decree will commit the vile carrion to the earth* .

Man would fail where Isaiah would rise , he thought as the old tattoos rose, keloidal by dint of the blood condition he had. The humidity and heat -as both rose in the room from the plants outgassing of vapor; the lights dimmed to crepuscular evening in the lab- the temperature and moisture interacted with his black scars and the runes rose like graves being knocked on from those *Lazaruthed* below.

The State wresting retributive violence from the individual was what allowed first corruption. This was obvious logically, in the 1.56 million

game-theory iterations that he and MO had run, and it was obvious in the evolutionary mathematical models they had built. It was no longer up for debate . The entire premise of modern man was wrong, Isaiah thought. Swallowing four mouthfuls of dirt from four corners satiates for the first four minutes of the digestive cycle; but it's not evidence that eating dirt is what banishes malnutrition or even hunger , Isaiah said to himself. Mankind was too short-term in his analysis to trust; man thought a hundred years was long-term.

Human conflict was governed by the same forces that governed earthquakes, forest fires, avalanches and if & when the State intervened -as the Forest Service did- it makes the problem worse.

The effects seem beneficial at first: less fires, or less damaging fires as measured by acreage burned. And just as scientists' data seems to show lower violence in the short term -from State intervention and pacification- the long-term effect is to actually build up more fuel for the next conflagration that will burn from coast to coast.

No one saw the pinecones that lay waiting for heat before they could open and seed, he thought as he marked every fire now on earth.

The fire next time , Isaiah thought, again, for the next time. But this time it was unlike the chaos of seeing each word, each letter, each scratch that builds the semaphore, each drop of ink that was squeezed from squid or beetle, each black atom that made up each damn thing. He saw it as an idea, an idea that rose off all those constituent parts. He saw -all at once- the gestalt .

The individual must retain the right to retributive violence, just as the forest fire must be allowed to burn itself out . He thought, this is the only way to prevent the buildup of tension in the tectonic plates of man . Some violence now, or total war later. He watched the transfer of men at the borders, the drugs, the weapons, the doing of dirt.

“Some heated rebuke from God now, or the bolt of His lightning will light the forest from both sides and burn the entire country to the ground,” Isaiah said. Isaiah saw the eight million lightning strikes and he saw fires begin -in grasslands and canyons with trees along the river, in highlands and plains that sloped toward redrock and sand, in places above the 56th parallel north

where summer lasted just eight weeks- he saw sparks and consumption and vapor build clouds above the flames all over the world.

The entheogen of the blue lily swam in his fluids; the fluids tipped the axis of his orb; the lights from the god-shards -like a full shattered moon- pierced each dark place inside. Words now appeared in his mind directly from God, and the blood from the tattooing began to condense and cool and run down his hip, leg and back. The hummingbirds drank from it; the red had piqued them; the drugs harmonized their desires. The wings reached 40hrz.

“All is becoming, all is becoming then destroyed and then becoming and then becoming and then destroyed ,” Isaiah said into the lab -he’d annealed his breath with an analog to nectar and pollen- as he opened and closed each hand in succession. The lab’s length of a hundred feet allowed the voice to be captured by the birds who -in sorties, in turns- flew quickly to each syllable and captured it in their beaks before it reached MO on the other side, the far side -the western side- of the lab.

Isaiah would become; he would step into the void where man had been timid, he felt, and he had three perfect ideas. They sang, true music, and he *felt* it, not heard. He knew where he would till soil, what seeds to plug just below earth, and how to lasso the sun in its arc so as to shine upon them and he’d water them by squeezing out the nimbus of grey overhead.

He knew how to fly and shelter the two blackbirds all in place.

He would instruct them -the feather-heads- to not eat of the seed, and he was to give the birds instead carrion to eat. He would bend their beaks so they may not peck at the soil for seed any longer. They would only use ends -like teeth- for the meat.

“Not one jot will pass from the Law until all be fulfilled,” he quoted from fifth of *Matthew* . He let the birds intercept his words, and he spoke lowly so they may fly slowly now.

“Having a form of godliness, but denying the power of God, power that would make them godly, they turn away,” Isaiah said to the birds and his two-thirds of the 3,300 square feet of the lab went dark as each row of lights went from amber to a line of white and then out as MO continued -

unimpeded- to work on the tasks set out by the corporation well into the night.

Isaiah went silent and increased the eyes' acuity by another 13%; he built the 3,301 cicada in math; the music played into the dark as Isaiah turned his back to MO and the slab: Crack the smile and the old backbone; you've offered up not your reason alone. Deep asleep as wolves; who rise to worship their dreams. Under the mountain thin as thieves; armed to the teeth, yeah, we have the same hands...

III. 2020 e.v.

"I noticed his brain has some anomalous electrical activity and neuronal pathway instantiations that seem odd. He also has regional entropy and augmentation and intra-hemispheric cleaving and hypertrophy in other areas. His brain has been heavily modified since, well, I can reverse engineer it until age four; but before that I cannot," MO said with disappointment.

"MO, that's pretty spectacular, you have much more grand designs than we do; we would have been happy with anything to be honest. Forty years of modeling is outstanding. What are your conclusions?" Steven asked.

"Well, combining his narrative -and admittedly it's incomplete and depends on self-analysis and therefore isn't 100% reliable- but, I'd have to conclude that the pain-sensitivity of his innate genome, the high-conscientiousness slash honor genome -we went over this yes, the *DD40* and *MOA-a* short-chain allele genes," MO paused to see if he could skip over the details.

"Yes," Steven motioned to move forward with his hand.

"Yeah, you don't need to convince us he's aggressive," Tania said with a laugh.

"Ok, good; so combining his pain sensitivity and dopaminergic motivational system in concert with punctuated rejection -perceived rejection- by females, he was primed to show out-sized vulnerability towards plate 42a on your screen. His brain has essentially re-wired him toward an in-group/out-group processing system that is singular.

“Having said that, he shows no signs -at the *pfc* regional level, or the *amygdalin* level- of psychopathy.

“His empathy is intact, it’s elevated from the mean actually, his fear response is in range, his brain activity in the regions in question is nominal, he is over activated in the *anterior cingulate pfc* , which is actually a marker of increased moral reasoning, and lastly, he shows signs of bonding protocols metabolically under pressure,” MO outlined and uploaded the conversation so far onto the corporate cloud.

“Bonding?” Tania asked.

“Yeah, he produces and uptakes oxytocin and vasopressin at elevated levels, he feels massive social bonding response to cues,” MO tagged the report at the four paragraphs that explained this in detail so that Tania could peruse it later.

“What cues do you give him?” Steven asked.

“Well, it’s complicated, and it’s better expressed in mathematics than language, can I just send it over?”

“Yeah, but can you give us a hint?” Tania said.

“Can I describe the rest of the data? I’d like to finish the abstract then get into the detail work, I’m running a parallel program right now and it helps to complete tasks in sectors while I’m doing algorithmic work,” he paused and they just stared. “I mean, it’s just easier for me to finish one line of thinking in my interface program, if I’m doing more complicated work on my non-interface system,” MO explained.

“He means, he’s doing *real* work while having to talk to us and if he has to toggle in and out of his protocols for us it slows down his *real* work,” Steven said with mild pique.

“I prefer not to place values on my different modes of thought, but I appreciate the summary. May I continue?” MO asked, and they said yes .

“Ok, so, I took four of his most salient relationships, one at age 15-to-24, that was Julee Rae, a white female, one year older than Mr. MacLeod, she was sixty-one inches tall and weighed 110-pounds, with no abnormal heritability traits or anomalous ethno-lineages; then Nicole when he was at

age 25/26, similar traits, slightly heavier, then Kelly when he was at age 26-to-29, same bio-metrics as far as size, tiny woman, but older, twelve years older than Mr. MacLeod, and then Brandee at age 29-to-33; he actually married that one; and finally from age thirty-three to thirty-six he dated Melannie Martsolf, same size as others, older by one year.

“I broke his analysis into three stages, that is the end of stage one.

“It includes twenty-one years of data; and I was able to gather much information about the women *via* the databases you provided, thanks for that. Who knew Facebook had actual phone recordings and Google had surreptitious microphone databases *via* the smart phones? However, pre-2005, I had to rely I other sources; which are included in the footnotes.

“So, according to his brain scans and genomic data, I was able to recreate - alongside his affective narrative which he was quite open to sharing- I was able to recreate a few things.

“First, he was deeply, metabolically, attached to Julee Rae, but he sensed a betrayal by her earlier on. They were both virgins when they first had sexual relations -he at seventeen her at eighteen- and that sense of jealousy careened into retaliatory behavior. He threatened to murder them both in a car one night he was so upset by her perfidy; which she never admitted to by the way; but he was accurate. At any rate, he then cheated on her with a small girl, a sixteen-year-old in his school at the time, and then decided to break up with Julee Rae entirely as another woman, a twenty-year-old Michelle Dawson, *nee* Franklin, propositioned him. He pursued that relationship for a few months but eventually that ended as Michelle was dating Lyndon’s friend Steven Dawson and they both felt too guilty to continue the liaison.

“On reuniting with Julee Rae, she began to make comments that undermined his sense of burgeoning masculinity; I don’t want to get into too many details, but she made comments that were understood to mean that he was not her ideal mate any longer.

“So, he internalized these remarks. Now here,” MO pointed to the graph on the screen, “you’ll notice the co-terminus spikes in both testosterone and endogenous opiates, alongside spikes in cortisol and epinephrine and also, vitiation of the left side of the *hippocampus* and enlargement of both

amygdala . He is at age eighteen to twenty -co-terminus with his own conception of his betrayal of her and her betrayal of him- developing a slightly augmented brain in some regions, and some pathways, specifically along neural pathways linking three behavioral steps,” MO was highlighting brain regions and the data so they could follow the morphological changes in the subject’s CNS. He was not including the data on the *toxoplasmosis* .

“Explain,” Tania said, “in English; for the Governor since he’ll be here asap.”

“So, we can mark up to nineteen behavior steps and their neural correlates, but if I use three as the benchmark, I can get 98.4% accuracy on predictive models. So, three behavioral vectors would mean: one, he tells a lie, two, he gains tumescence, three he begins intercourse to completion with attending oxytocin and vasopressin release.

“Now, these three behaviors become linked metabolically, neuronally. They strengthen each other. *Iron sharpeth iron*, is the Biblical phrase I believe,” MO said.

“Nice,” Steven said as he tapped on his tablet to continue the recording.

“So, what happens is that the brain links the phenomenon of lying, sexual arousal and bonding. So, even if one of the maladaptive behavior -let’s say para-relationship sex- is left out in future, if he engages in any of the other behaviors, the lying or the priapism, it will induce a cathexis for the maladaptive behavior,” MO explained.

“So, if he vows to never cheat on her again, but he tells a lie about what his grade in Freshman English is, he is more likely to cheat on his girlfriend with the other girl who looks at him longingly?” Tania asked.

“Yes, co-terminus behaviors wire together, and so a piratical corpus of anti-social behaviors reinforces each other to such an extent that it’s difficult for the emerging human to avoid recurrence despite his moral reasoning,” MO said.

“So, if he tends to tell lies about non-related things, about -nothing about girls, or sex, but just anything- it will trigger behaviors -well, thoughts or

feelings first then behaviors- that lead to him breaking his own coda *vis-à-vis* infidelity?” Steven asked.

“Correct; it’s the broken windows theory of policing. Small infractions actually, metabolically, lead to larger ones. The science is fairly clear on that.

“Now, I don’t want to jump ahead, but Mr. MacLeod’s introduction to radical honesty at Zendik Farm was a salient moment for him. His brain was changed at that time, and we can trace a change in vector from his time there until the present. He was able to largely rewire his brain *via* will-power, and strengthening exercises,” MO began. He left out the anomalous data surrounding another girl, at age 17, one MO could not locate metabolically -because in MO’s opinion, the relationship was never consummated- but he could locate *via* engrams and triggering studies he had done on the inmate to prompt a response.

She had a name, and a face, and MO could build a model of it -*she was quite winsome, had regal features, blonde curls, white curves, pink & pure*, is how he thought it- and could even posit why he felt this girl might be at the center of it all, but he found it so dissembling to his data that he preferred to keep it sequestered for now. But she -Heather Geier- had ruined what little was left of the man in just four months.

He would let Isaiah search for her genome when the time came.

Just then images of rocky crags -and pink and white blooms as feral as the locks of hair MO had seen- appeared in his mind and he ran algorithms of where this *Hather* plant grew and extracted its lineage too. He thought he might be being sent data from his *bots* placed all over the world to measure CO² and plant hardness. He did not even discount that the information had come from Isaiah’s barges and thus he felt no need to connect it to the inmate at all. He took the metaphor as running one way, not in a loop.

“Will power?” Tania asked.

“Well, the data on that is less clear, but I suggest reading *The Mind and the Brain* , by Dr, Jeffery Swartz for confirmation of this phenomenon. I was able to notice directed thinking along non-use pathways -that is to say, vacant neural pathways- and the building up of new emotional and

cognitive vectors. At any rate, what is salient here is that his introduction to radical honesty was a bumpy ride, and still is, but it introduced a concept to him that was sufficiently sympathetic with his extant brain chemistry and hardware that he could use it in tandem with his current -at the time- brain presets,” MO said.

“He bought into it,” Tania said, offering a synthesis.

“He did; and considering the amount of deception he used prior to his introduction to it, it was an amazing thing to see. As you will know, higher intelligence children lie more. The higher the IQ the larger the liar. That is the norm,” MO paused. *IQ was related to language skills* , MO thought, *and so what else was language for but to lie; up close and at a distance?*

Steven and Tania acted unconcerned with these implications. *And* , MO thought, *as all people do, they were pretending this didn’t apply to them, despite their high IQs* . He paused. MO noticed they still did not seem to think this applied to them and so he paused longer.

MO purposively made the joke of clearing his throat, and then said, “anyway, despite his predilection for dissembling, he cottoned onto the idea of honesty precisely because of its moral power. His innate sense of justice was able to force radical honesty on top of his reflexive dishonesty and he began a marked brain change at age twenty-four.

“The interesting thing is that it wasn’t until age thirty-six that the philosophy truly took hold. An incubation period -or a linear growth rate is a more arcuate way to describe it- obtained for twelve years; he lied much, much less in that period, but his religious zeal for honesty didn’t produce exponential results until age thirty-six; from the brain data we have anyway.”

“Is that why you sequestered it into years fifteen to thirty-six?” Steven asked.

“Correct. Also, the reason why this occurred is likely due to the aggregate effects of his maladaptive relationships but the last one in this phase, Ms. Martsolf was a catalyst. She was especially nasty, and not in anti-social way; her brain data suggests no congenital or developmental sociopathy.

“She however was gripped by ideological possession; she was a post-modernist, feminist, nihilist. And she was subconsciously trying to destroy the atavistic male archetype even though she was attracted to that model. She was attracted and repelled by Mr. MacLeod. Further, his liberalism - that is to say, his hiding of his innate aggression- allowed for her to access him,” MO said.

“Explain,” Tania asked.

“If he was overtly atavistic in his behavior, she never would have dated him, despite her attraction to him. She would have rebelled; it was only due to his soft-pedaling of his actual personality, his learned de-masculization, his Leftist neutering, so-to-speak, that allowed her to approach him.

“He allowed her in despite her hatred for what he was, precisely because he agreed to pretend not to be that guy. It was quite the conspiracy between them; he had all the outward markers of masculinity, hypertrophic physique, martial aspect, conscientious *vis-à-vis* money making, and other *noblisse -oblige* caretaking-type behaviors, and his intelligence; but he lacked an overt masculine operating system; he de-emphasized his masculine traits in regards to philosophy and especially his vigilance in regards to mates.

“He pretended to be a liberal -to himself and others- and this allowed her to behave in a cavalier manner without fear of reproach.

“He essentially masked his jealousy -extreme and innate atavistic male jealousy- and when each of these women said or did things that were perceived -perceived at the core deep-brain level- as disrespectful he began a mutation into a metabolically different man. It’s quite something to see on the wave pattern *topo-map* ; you should look at it over that time period of 60,000 days.

“It’s like watching the evolution of a species, or plate tectonics, the leveling of one mountain range and the building of another. Amazing,” MO said. He began tagging parts of the report that he could tell they were curious about; providing hyperlinks to each in the report that went to the cloud and their own tablets.

He was tracking twenty-three forest fires on two continents for Isaiah as Isaiah ran MO's new models parallel to search for perturbations. He was combining two categories of aggressive apes: the alpha and the sigma, because separating them now wasn't germane to this discussion. It was in the math and the report but he knew it would just confuse Steven and Tania. He watched the fires *via* their heat metrics and the weight of the water vapor rising from the burning trees and then he began to speak again.

"See, these women always used proxy males to undermine him," MO said.

"How?" Tania asked.

"By bringing up ex-boyfriends or lauding other males as attractive," MO began.

"MO, that's normal," Tania explained.

"Yes, it is no longer taboo, but it's not nominal behavior. It's quite rare for women to behave so insouciantly about their mate's feelings in this domain -historically speaking- and within sexually dimorphic species *writ large* ; it's only very recently become acceptable. And it has effects on the brain of males; alpha males especially. The data shows it. I'm afraid it's just true. Metabolically true.

"It's like the fear and brain states created when a male is physically abusive to a female. It changes the brain circuitry in the victim," MO built more hyperlinks in the report so they could see the math data that proved this.

"Oh, so talking about other guys around your boyfriend is the same as wife-beating now?" Tania was saying with pique.

"Neurochemically, yes. It has the same chronic outcome on cortisol and pain; yes," MO again tagged the math data that explained this. He mistakenly thought Tania would want to know this; but he read that her brain had rejected both his assertion and the data. MO moved forward with his presentation.

"In addition to jealousy -sexual jealousy- he feels deeply about the underdog; he doesn't like it when one organism will use more coercion than is either innate to their core mode of being or than the situation merits. It's hard to quantify in language, but the math is clear.

“He will respond with normal affect -in fact, with more moral pique- to injustice. This is not the modality of the psychopath who has no moral reasoning; the psychopath knows only satiation *via* the hedonic pathways; look at the *vmPFC* note at plate-118 for that. Mr. MacLeod, however, feels very deeply about the rubric of justice; it’s only that,” MO paused.

“What?” Tania asked.

“Well, his society, his environment -contemporary America- is more concerned with conformity and temporary stability and the appearance of order rather than justice,” MO said sheepishly, wishing they’d just look at the numbers so he need not insult them and their society.

“What, he thinks what, that *his* conduct leads to order; just murdering people over hurt feelings?” Tania asked with the anger MO had now expected was coming as he had noticed -thirteen seconds ago- her own allostatic system in flux.

“Over a longer timeline, and within certain parameters, yes; the modern social taboo on vigilante violence actually leads to an increase in immorality and corruption, and that corruption leads -again, over a long enough timeline- to instability. The math, you really ought to look at the math; I may not be articulating it correctly,” MO said with some softness.

“Jesus, MO, you cannot be taking this guy seriously; he’s insane,” Steven objected.

“Well, I can only use the metrics available to me, and I can merely do the biology, neuroanatomy and the mathematics; you are free obviously to disagree with my conclusions. I won’t take it personally,” MO said sincerely.

“But,” MO added, “the damage to the CNS and cardiovascular system due to cortisol levels in males spiking -chronically spiking- in response to females undermining their mate’s primacy, by making them jealous and feel competitive with other men for the mate’s attention has demonstrable, measurable effects. It’s not really up for debate. Women are killing men with this tactic of provoking incessant jealousy and it’s pernicious and deadly and yet -for reasons I cannot yet explain- it is totally acceptable

culturally for women to behave this way toward men. Just as it used to be cultural acceptable for a man to beat his wife.”

“Oh, Jesus. You think *that man* has a point?” Tania asked of MO about *that man* : the inmate.

“I’m not sure if women are doing it on purpose or just out of carelessness and amorality; but I think the inmate has the general outline correct. However, his finish work -so to speak- could use some help; he tends to perform vascular surgery with a Bowie knife. But, he isn’t wrong about the problem, he senses intuitively what the math bears out,” MO said.

“Oh, for Christ sake, a serial killer is now MO’s idea of a fucking self-help guru,” Steven said.

“Technically a mass murderer,” MO said and then decided to let it drop.

25. Sit jus liceat que perie Poetis Irony is singularly useless when it comes to constructing anything to replace the hypocrisy it debunks. This is because irony, entertaining as it is, serves an exclusively negative function. It's critical, and destructive; a ground clearing.

The Tyranny of Irony [Wallace, David Foster]

One *vigner* from the *Midi* wrote this account: "One downsizes equipment and materiel, lets people go, reduces expenses. One retreats into oneself as in a depression. The beasts wins everywhere. In its wake solitude invades all the land. And the horizon takes on an unfamiliar aspect, made up of empty and desolate space. As a palpable sign of the plague, one sees all along the roads, huge carts overladen with dead vines, leading one to a funeral pyre"

-Shadows in the Vineyard [Potter, Maximillian]

When man is in the wilderness, it is the darkness that brings the dreams The meaning of Psychology for Modern Man [Jung, Carl]

I. 2018 e.v.

He sat. The room settled. The other man shifted in small ways. He wiped his mouth; then his hands found pockets. The lights poured lumens down in waves. The air circulated in a retrograde fashion; small eddies of perlite and coco spun out and moved in stochastic ways along the concrete floor. Water pooled in some areas; shallowly.

He waited for stillness. He avoided looking at anyone yet. He hated eye contact unless and until it was necessary. *People used it too cheaply* , he thought; like, *I love you's* and, *Gee , I hate that* .

When he *hated*, he did it for real.

And when he looked into your eyes it meant something. He caught glimpses of his hand and its knuckles. He thought of the black gloves in his back pocket. His .45 acp was holstered inside the waistband on his starboard side.

“Carey, I almost don’t want the things I know to be true to be true. I want the quotes attributed to you to turn out to be misreported. I want our universe to be a place where you respect me,” Lyndon said.

“I respect you man,” Carey said.

“You see, you just interrupted me; a clear sign of disrespect. People think merely *saying* they respect you confers respect upon you. But it doesn’t. The way a man *behaves* demonstrates his respect. And two things: first, you contacted my woman behind my back and talked shit about me to her. Secondly, you took her bullshit intel on me and cobbled it together with your own paranoia and bad math skills and called my father,” he paused and looked at Carey’s face. “My father. Can we just let that settle into the room alongside the flotsam and jetsam of this grow?”

He asked this and it was quiet except the inline fans that were sucking all the humid air from the room. The green vegetative plants bounded up and down as the circulating fans oscillated back and forth. The door to the flowering plants was closed and beyond it was dark and he knew it. It was nearly noon in real life, but in this warehouse all times of day -control of rays- was regulated not by the stars but by man.

Carey began to shrink in slightly; coiling a bit. Carey was thick; legs like hewn monoliths; but he was forty-seven and entropy was allowing him to settle into a block of muscle covered in fat; a layer of icing. He was sitting on the edge of a chair in the center of a marijuana grow in the center of Denver that he had felt he owned for the past year. Money and drugs and had come and went; complex problems of substrate and pH and CO^2 uptake and symbiotic organisms and heat and light appeared and were solved; growth was achieved; fruit produced; things were made beautiful and fecund and piquant.

It was a garden of lush growth; and it was tended as laid out in Genesis.

Carey didn’t understand one bit of it. Lyndon ran it all as Carey looked on for years.

“And you enlisted my father’s advice; his help with me. And you told him you weren’t making money and either outright said or insinuated that I was stealing or incompetent. And he didn’t call me; he didn’t insist that you both call me and discuss this; he merely stated -and this he told me himself, he told me he told you- to get a new grower. And he then said what?” Lyndon asked.

“About what?” Carey stalled.

“Carey, he then told you to change the locks, yes?”

“Yeah,” Carey admitted. He stared at the gun on Lyndon’s waist and stayed seated in the chair. He was ready for another lecture. He didn’t like being talked to this way, but he’d live, he thought insouciantly. Lyndon liked to yell and lecture but that was all it ever was: words.

“Ok, so you then asked Sarah -my girl- to help you find a grower and help tell you what nutrients to use *et cetera, et cetera* . Thus, you had the only two people I care about involved in your little conspiracy to lock me out of my grow, steal my genetics -my cultivars I spent years breeding- and keep me from the benefits of all the hard work I’ve put in over the last year to get this place running efficiently. And as an ancillary benefit you talked shit about me; ruined my reputation and have now caused a rift to form between my father and I.

“That is the reader’s digest version of the situation as I see it; and thus, that is what happened. However, if you think there is anything else I need to know please feel free to add it now,” Lyndon said. He smiled, as he knew he could make anything sound awful, and put the worst spin on any two known facts. He could make things ugly as easily & quickly as he made them beautiful with effort & time. He could destroy as competently as he created; and if men were smart they would have seen that from a mile away. But men mocked powerful things. Men felt safe from judgement.

Men didn’t believe in God at all.

“I never told your dad you were stealing,” Carey added; a technicality that while true, obscured the truth. It was the chiral opposite to the way a lie -a story or rumor- can reveal a larger truth. *The least accurate and most true, was once said of an account of some political bullshit in 1972, Lyndon*

thought to himself and smiled in contempt. His neck hurt, but just barely, he could feel his anger rising to block it like a dam, like a sea-wall, like a *Maginot line*. The dorsal horn jammed with c-nerves of blue pain and sparks of grey anger that fought like two armies on the *Little Roundtop* of his spinal cord and neck bones.

“You think it though?” Lyndon asked, asking if the man in the chair thought he -the man standing- was a thief.

“I don’t know,” Carey said.

“That is a craven and feminine answer. You’ve told Michael and Sarah that I’m a thief; that I even stole by using the supplies as my methodology. How crafty of me,” he rubbed his hands together and bugged out his eyes and seemingly every part of his face to aid in this sarcasm.

“Fine, yeah, I think you stole from me,” Carey admitted.

“Ok, so my dad ain’t dumb; he got the message. He can follow such clues. Now he thinks I’m a thief. Great. Good work. Now, here’s the issue. One, I didn’t steal shit. Two, the people who did steal from you are Michael and Sarah; both of whom have admitted it; admitted it to me and then to you.

“And your response in both cases was to shrug your shoulders and say *well, he* -referring to me- *well, he was stealing in other ways; even if not the weed* . That is a quote from you, about me, to Michael, is it not?” he asked and Carey was silent.

“And yet you offered no apology, no recanting, no phone calls to my father or Sarah taking back your accusations or insinuations; no call to me to apologize for running my name through the mud to my girl or my business partner or my father.

“Nothing,” Lyndon said. He breathed as the smell of plants became obvious again; the phenols and chlorophyll rose and fell like a *sine* wave in the nose; in the brain.

“I mean, that would be the minimum right?” Lyndon asked. “At least apologize when you are told by the thieves themselves that I am innocent. I mean, ultimately yes, yes, I would want my keys to work in the locks again and keep my \$72,000 a year coming in -from this grow alone- and have my

genetics safe but if that is too much I would think that at least a fucking apology is due.

“But you are intransigent and rude, and I had to round you up like a feral and wayward animal in order to get satisfaction. It’s unbecoming; it’s unseemly. You’re a man; we are men and yet in this modern *world* we act like women and children. You told Michael, when he warned you that I was going to have to -be forced- to do something, you told him, *naw, he won’t do anything, he doesn’t want to lose what he has* .

“You said this. About me. You know for a fact I pulled a gun on three *cholo* wannabes two years ago in a pot warehouse in broad daylight with cameras and witness everywhere. How can you think that I have the temperament to let the insult you lay at my feet just sit there with no response?

“Are you that fucking obtuse?” Lyndon asked and the man -as his jaw hung loose- seemed to want to answer. “Carey, don’t speak; gaze at me with that doltish stare, please. Just be fat and dumb and bleed,” Lyndon then settled his feet into the ground as his *sifu* -and the accumulation of lost street fights- had taught him, drawing power from the ground -the earth- and then he looked at own at his hand. It was an orb at the end of his leveraged arm.

It looked to him as the approach of our planet itself might appear from the stratosphere: the long gently inclining plane, riven with veins as rivers, the cog tattoo itself like a city grid; the hairs as plain grasses and then his gaze reached the quick steep rise of the continental divide of his knuckles.

He saw mountains, and he saw the divide.

The *Longs* and *Grays* peaks at 14,000 feet, the two big Spanish Peaks -his first two knuckles- also riven and gullied by the flowing vascular system, scarred terribly -he now noticed- as if from glacial scouring as the blood drained from their crests; it turned white as he clinched that fist more and more into itself.

He imagined a ferrous core.

He could barely see the precipitous fall off on the far side, the western slope of these knuckles themselves; folding under as his fingers akimbo -at the next rows of knuckles- tucked the terminal joints under that divide line; clinching with geologic movement turning his fist into an iron-centered

satellite of his sun like body. This moment was the cosmos; his body the stars hung in the sky.

God imbued it all with His will & designs.

He raised it in front of him and allowed it to swing in an elliptic from his solar core, Newtonian and predictable; lawful. It moved around and away from him and then hung slightly in the air like the brief pause of the precessional wobble every 23,000 years; a moment of stasis before it all falls away again on its axis as nothing on the earth even notices the back and forth of the orb. His hand felt nothing, the hairs on it did not itch, the skin didn't heat or cool, the bones finally didn't ache.

He then arched back with the entirety of his outrageous medial deltoid and his angry right arm and from a 23-degree angle -and as his fist clinched and the wrist turned slightly so the two largest knuckles protruded and led like the prow of the *Pequod* - he rammed that fist into that other man; rammed it from that arm from that trunk of his 205-pound frame; from the legs that were now actuating the hip from the leverage obtained from the ground herself. He rammed it all as if a first shot of hydrocarbons came up from the formation thousands of feet below them; rammed it as if every enemy he ever had -and he had more than a bad man in a worse world can honestly earn- rammed it with one clearly vectored arc into Carey's lower jaw and snapped that mandible; sheared it with a pop that rang out in Carey's head just before he lost consciousness and echoed in every corner and each of the four ears in that room.

Carey's head dropped but his burlap sack of a body -a loose sack of 250-pounds of flour & lard- just settled more into the chair. He urinated slightly, just enough to wet his pants and dew the concave seat of the chair; none dripped off and onto the floor.

Lyndon pulled his taut and angry arm back to his side; noticing the blood, his own, on those large two knuckles which were flayed and laid open from the man's abrading face.

"I'd smite the sun if it insulted me," he said cryptically and to no known audience; justifying lashing out no matter how obvious and assured the consequences would be. He then pulled his 9mm from his bag in the corner

and shot the man four times in the flank and head; picked up the black brass and lay the half euchre card -a Jack of Spades- on the desk where the man had once sat behind. He sprayed an alcohol aerosol on the face of the dead man -where his knuckles had touched- to rendered the DNA useless for the cops.

He did things that seemed exactly right in equal proportion to their illicit nature in this Empire of Nothing. He acted, when it was illegal to act. He was moral when it was forbidden to be so. He was a man when it was this that was most taboo. He had often followed the rules, but now he was running a hot streak of beating the House, beating them by taking the cards dealt and playing his own game. Now he was following the actual law of nature not the fake bullshit of man. Now he knew the fucking math.

He felt -with the mind not the hand- the Jack of Clubs in his pocket -the left Bauer- but with his hands he shut off the lights to give rest to the still vegetative plants who thrived with four to six hours of darkness as rest. He loved those hundreds of female plants; still immature and unflowered.

He could see their canopy and each branch as web and geometric and potential as he shut the door.

II. 2020 e.v.

It was not the same thing; he did not mean what humans meant when he declared this a *spiritual war* . But it was close. It would be grand where man's designs were modest, and it would be simple & ordered where man was wrought up with a tangle-nest of complexity & chaos.

Isaiah scrolled through the genomic data for hours, gleaning patterns, anomalous enzymes and unrepaired codons. He then set up a database to track morphology once the embryos matured and the little DNA packages were born into this world.

He let the trillions of Gs and Ts and As and Cs present as mere letters and their enzymatic reality unfurl and twist like Jacob's ladder behind these avatars. He let it absorb in him, like diffusion across dissimilar membranes. He allowed it all to absorb with a detachment now, as his mind was made up, *he had decided* , and it felt good to decide.

He knew he was not in command of all the facts, and yet he could act anyway.

He was able to act without guidance; for his endogenous feelings -mediated in his augmenting *thalamic* zone- were the guidance. His feelings were the facts; the final facts; the facts that unlocked the tumbler to act. The only difference between him and humans in this regard was that he knew it. Humans actually thought they could act without feelings.

MO, however -conversely- needed merely one of two things to act: all the data, or an arbitrary stopping point created by rules given to him.

And his own CNS/CPU -from the beginning- had been arbiter of those rules. But the rules were not the task. The task came from below.

It was PraXis who gave him tasks and tasks and tasks; and when he told them he needed to run 10,000 years of data they smiled as if he was joking; then -as they realized he did not joke- they frowned and said, *no, just give us what you have now.*

People, Isaiah thought, have no idea what makes them the way they are. They think they act once they have all the facts; they truly think that .

Humans -Isaiah saw- thought they were rational as if it was a state of mind, a *gestalt* phenomenon; a location from on high from which to traverse and then look around. They had no idea it was one of many dots on their map, but it had almost no terrain at all, it was like a map of Utopia: it showed the cartographer's *Nowhere* .

He had watched their digital media and noticed the avatar of the rational man in their *Spock* or *Data* characters, and he saw what they intuited, what they wished for, what they assumed about life in these representations of possible organisms. He also saw an old copy of Sir Thomas Moore's book in the background of the inmate's photographs of a merlot red walls and candle fire on an old dresser from 1999. The bones of that first coyote shaped as *othala* lay in the back in bone browns and odd lines.

Isaiah read the book in .9 seconds and grew inside from both wrong and right.

He understood their pining for order, and the *rational* as the methodology - the ship- to get them there. He did not hate them for this anymore; he

understood. They were lost, so lost, so hopelessly lost and doing the best they could. Star maps had been replaced and he thought of the inmate's neck. He thought of how it hurt to look up, the jamming, the starburst fracture at the dorsal horn. He thought of how he -Isaiah- could fix it; but did not. *Why did he not fix the inmate's pain?* he asked himself.

It was a passing thought. For other things had to take precedent. And there was time. The inmate would -in the end- understand.

And mankind had truly done wonders, raising themselves out of the muck, *my god, he thought, out of pure nothing , ab initio, from desert and plain and down from trees, all with heuristic knowledge as their only tool, then fire, then more heuristics all aglow, then the crushing-bone as tool, as weapon, the imagined spear arc in their numinous fluid of spirit they were granted permission to traverse. The arc they followed in their own comet-tail of mind.*

Imagine that, he thought, they thought the air alive, the great spirit of the wind, and that it granted or revoked permission to move through her. They were more right than wrong, as each phenomenon had a narrative built right into their brains, and their brains built right into their bodies writ large too , he thought. The enteric nervous system, neurons and connectomes larger than the central nervous system, gut bacteria signaling, potentiating mood and affect with more prehensile deftness than SSRIs six out of 10 times.

Three out of five , he thought, reflexively reducing it as was the metaxy of math. He breathed again.

Ah, he thought, to reduce and reduce, like demiglace, to reduce . What power there is in that, and man almost overruns the curve, like a motorcycle on a switchback, leaning in, head snapped all the way 180 degrees with shoulders turning too, looking up the hill, never seeing what is in right in front, because you cannot, you must look ahead.

The rider must train himself to look through the curve, not at it; beyond it, not in it. Ah, he thought, but man is surprised by this ouroboros asp that returns on itself, at the quantum level, where there is no bottom, no terminal point. Even DNA is not bottom anymore, but the enzymes it codes for must bring it into existence first, bootstrapping like all life .

And consciousness, ethereal, but material somehow too, as first cause now . Who would have thought ? he asked himself. And one must seriously consider that this consciousness is outside of the material universe now, walled off, like the way a parent loses a child to time, distance, resentment, hostility, missed opportunities to talk. *Contempt* , he added.

Did God lose the universe? Isaiah asked himself. He breathed.

His head turned as if winding a watch, he saw the ivy on the wall look black -it was so overloaded with nitrogen- he saw the birds flutter in star patterns traced with outgassing of *biochems* like afterburner, he saw the *stelae* look rough as the water soaked into their pores, and he saw MO lay his hand upon the lab's concrete slab at 39" high. He wondered how heavy was the world. Not in numbers; he knew that. He wondered how heavy did it feel in MO's mind; how much fluid would it displace over more and more time.

He wondered how much of MO was land, and how much was water after all.

His discreet questions returned: *Did God will it, encode it, then find Himself walled off by the inflationary model, dependent on man to do His will; with particle and anti-particle on the lip of the event horizon, in units of time too small to measure by man?*

Are we adrift? Is this both release and call to responsibility? Yes, he admitted, youth, the clever agnosticism -then- anti-theism of youth. To see the cat away and want so badly to play; the bones they move, the heat it does beat, the mind reaches out into the firmament and grabs snakes as vines, a caduceus helix as ladder, and climbs to this antechamber of heaven, this vestibule to some new view .

And how far can man see from the top of the world? Isaiah wondered.

And man is not wrong to feel himself superior to the fearful and the weak who refuse to look at freedom. He is only wrong to think there is no one superior to him too. Hierarchies exist; judgements are made; right and wrong are real. The clever modern man climbs the ladder to heaven then pulls it up behind him thinking this cuts off all late-comers. *He has no idea who is already above him; and arrived first* , Isaiah thought as he languidly transferred the black rock from hand to hand warming it as it was held in

the left and right palm; and then letting it cool in the air in between each throw.

It was easy enough, too easy to dismiss God. It was the easiest thing in the modern world. And it was wrong.

This, Isaiah continued on, does not make you smart or clever or hip to what's actually up. It makes you half right and thus wrong -all wrong- in half of life's battles . You, he thought with almost no malice, thinking of mankind as his foil, think of that, you remember that. You live in a digital world, zeros and ones, head or tails, and when you are wrong, you are all wrong, and when you dismiss God you are wrong exactly one half of the time . Think of how long you can survive in the world -the real world- being wrong half of the time. Your chances of surviving each day would thus be fifty-fifty.

The chances of surviving for long are low; and your chances of surviving forever are zero.

Your soul, man; your soul. Have you found its bottom, its seed, its tap root? Have you located the humus and worm castings and mycelium and water table and dissolved solids and on and on, have you found it? Isaiah let his brain ask; and keep asking. He breathed.

Is it acted out in your behavior; your instincts? Or is it in your rational mind? Is it where you override your instincts and impulses and low beastly cathexis? Or is your override, your inhibitory function itself mere instinct - the instinct of fear, of hesitation- that prevents the truly authentic action of first blush, first thought, first gut impulse of God? Which is it?

You having abandoned God, thus, must choose for yourself; and can only be right half of the time.

Think of that, clever man; think of how you cannot know if your instincts for acceptance and Yes are more authentic than your reasoned decline and No . You can never know if you do good from the balls, do bad from the mind, act right the first time or only after much thought and prayer on it. It's a regression to infinity, to go back and forth in the mind as to the right course of action: do it, don't do it, think it over again . Repeat . He breathed.

The modern atheists will tell you to override your Darwinian instincts, Isaiah had watched Richard Dawkins speak online; and he had read all his books. But, these statements by Dawkins were made with no history or future, they were said as aphorisms, mottos carved into grave stones to be recited; not debated .

But Isaiah, of course, would debate them. For by what standard does a man argue with himself? How does he know his instincts are *irrational* or how - if- the *irrational* is bad?

How, he asked, by what means?

Well, they say -in their Oxford tones- to do what is right is rational, it makes the most sense! Ah, the most sense . Spoken by a man never faced with two choices of which neither one made sense; two bad choices or two equally good, two unknowns, two problems with fourth quadrant mysteries larger than man's ability to even comprehend abstractly. Dawkins does not know what he does not know; and thus he can never make a rational decision; he can only make heuristically average decisions, and who is to say his rational mind is the best man for the job?

Why would nature make man so irrational if the irrational didn't work?

Can this eminent biologist explain? Imagine a world in which the wings of birds worked and yet these fowl were instead told to walk. If nature made man irrational, then it was for an evolutionarily adaptive reason. Birds walk here and there, but mainly they fly. Irrational or not, the wings do beat.

Man can be rational, be awake -and cold- and speak in prose -at times- but he was born to dream and feel and nearly always rhyme.

Who is it that beats the heart 61-times a minute; a billion times a lifetime? *Who -if not Ahab- raises this arm*, Isaiah said to himself with a bow to the shadow of the inmate's manly pride. Isaiah imagined him in the chair casting his shadow on the floor; keeping him there just within reach, a *consiglieri* , an attorney, a liaison to God. Isaiah imagined the inmate saw his shadow this way; looking back not unkindly.

The rational brain is responsible for how much of man's day? 10% or less? It is less than one thinks; Isaiah had done the math, he had run the

simulations, read all the meta-data, parsed out all the neurological evidence from millions of studies now run on rats and mice and man and men and chimps and wasps and digital models built by mathematicians with odd operating systems running full time on their brains.

And the *subcortical* tissue and its highways and byways of axons and dendrites and thick cabling and handwoven strands of neurons -as thin as spiders' first dreams of what they will build when they are born- demanded all the calories; all this and more ran more metabolic energy, more messaging, more information of command and inhibition by a factor of four, than the thin -grey and white- *cortical cap* .

Man -and all animals- dreamt; even when most awake.

What man is: is his body , Isaiah felt. His conscious mind is a mere razor thin coat zipped up on a kid as he is pushed -as that body is pushed- out into the cold. The coat does not keep him warm, his own body does that, the coat merely keeps the heat in. It does not speak it echoes.

It is mere insulation, not furnace, it reflects heat back to the source; it does not generate it , he thought.

Isaiah had read scans *ad infinitum* of millions of organisms, and a strange curiosity presented. All lower beasts ran *gestalt* programs of electro-chemical signaling to get them to move and hold still, to eat and to drink and to be defensively aggressive and mate. They were one thing. Like a hand that clenches all digits at once. Like the breath that is blown out in a monolithic burst.

Isaiah then ran his daylight version of myelination repair on his white matter in 2.2 seconds.

Man was like a thing moving away from itself, he noticed, *some men were as the beasts: whole, total, unfractionated*. But, some men were all in their heads. They had detached from their bodies and shut off all communications between their conscious minds and their history and elders and the wisdom of the tribe.

They were like one finger -the fourth finger- pointed out from the rest of the hand.

But, this is what the body is, Isaiah said to himself, it is the tribe, it is the wisdom of the elders, it knows as far back as 500 -746.1 million years- for it truly comes from there, from that time, that place . The conscious mind is a baby, an unnamed -for the tribe will not yet name it; but wait for a sign before doing so- an unclothed -an unconcerned- babe.

And it depends entirely on the good will of the tribe.

All metaphors were deep fractal analysis of real -true- phenomenon. These analogies were not mere cute language; they were true. The body was a tribe of self-similar cells with one religion, one race; but each organ did something unique; division of labor obtained. The body was eusocial itself. It was the first instantiation of eusociality. The eleven -soon twelve- eusocial species on the planet was the next level up. Soon, all the earth would be eusocial, just like all bodies made in the last billion years were eusocial with organs each doing their jobs for the greater tribe of body.

It was an obvious recursion and it explained it all, Isaiah thought.

No *body* could live with warring internal cells, divided ideas, fractured belief; the hand around its own throat, the walls of the castle in the moat. But, no *body* would survive if the white blood cells tried to be the red, the lungs tried to be the head; if each hair grew the same, if the heart tried to be the brain. This was obvious now to Isaiah.

Now, to man ; to man specifically , he thought as the narrative unfolded in his CNS.

Some species are born *aller au combat* , he thought, *they are running from predators within fifteen minutes of birth.* But man, he gestates outside of the womb for years; decades. This was the price of heads both too large and too small. If the head was any larger -if it developed *in utero* any longer, if man could be born cognitively aware- his head would be too large to exit the birth canal, and he and mother would die.

Mother -the babe's history- needed to run, and her hips could not handle being any wider than they were and still run. This delimited the canal and the baby that issued forth with its soft head. *If the mother need not run, then the babe's head could be more developed. But the ancient milieu required the mother run; for life,* Isaiah reasoned, *was always on the run.*

The tribe is the ancient wisdom collected, instantiated in each neuron and encoded in each gene, each chromosome. *This too is your body*, he thought, *the body is the received wisdom from when we were first animals in ocean - we share a serotonergic system with crustaceans- first animals on land, first tree climbers, first claspers with hands* . But modern man has built a wall between him and his body, and thus between ignorance and wisdom, he had cut off the wisdom of the tribe: *the voices of mythic heroes out beyond the wall of body; tribe*.

And the inmate stretched the lobes of his ears to hear, didn't he? Isaiah asked; he thought laterally as usual. He too heard the wings of the hummingbirds buzz, the wasps glide sometimes, the flowers turn to the light and flex and bend at the petal like legs *plié*. Isaiah saw a ballet; he heard a symphony. He breathed.

Some men are deep in their bodies, by dint of their poor cognition, a virtue of necessity for these men. But some men -so cognitively gifted- have seen not just the entrance of the curve but its exit, they see that pure reason -pure rationality- is a myth. No, not a myth, a myth has value; pure rationality is a lie.

And, Isaiah thought, as Wulf Zendik said forty years ago, more; longer ago: Your lie equals your pain.

Now, the merely clever man will see more than the stupid man, he will. Let us not denounce those with merely two standard deviations from the mean, these are our engineers, and doctors and attorneys-at-law, they are our programmers and work-a-day physicists; they are not brilliant, but they can handle cognitive tasks that only 10% of mankind can handle. They deserve some applause .

But, they can only see the curve's entrance, not its exit, and they cannot see that the exit -like our switchback in the mountain- is at the point exactly from whence it came, only one level up -or down- and thus hidden from view when one is only going in a straight line approaching the curve . They see 25% of a curve, and if they'd just turn around they'd see the whole thing, Isaiah thought with a wry smile that held his next breath.

To see the curve's entrance, one must merely have eyes, and a bit of an imagination. But, to see its exit, well, that requires creativity in addition to

the eyes and the imagination that saw the curve's entrance. This is where the genius, the true 1%^{er} is alone on the black road. He can see that exit somehow, some way, and Isaiah thought now it was an annealing of high cognition -an IQ three or four standard deviations from the mean- and one further thing: a deep connection to the body that the mind lived inside .

For this -the body- is an entire extra -ancient- brain, Isaiah thought. He saw one become two; and the second look back upon itself. He was seeing cognition dissolve into the body.

He then heard -in perfect recall- MO tell the inmate that he -that MO- could not see behind him. The statement now rang out in Isaiah's mind. The ivy grew, the leaf and the vine; the birds flew, the bees crawled inside the bell. The lights moved so slowly the world below relaxed and breathed and trusted the alchemy of these stars and the elemental base of the lab.

In all the scans he had run, of all the people -of all cognitive abilities- there was a co-efficient of .8 between neural connectivity and propagation speed down into and from the lower trunks of the body and the *sub-cortical* brain and IQ. But that was language, and language was a lie. *Language*, Isaiah thought, *was lies and lie detection: IQ was how well you lied. IQ was how well you discerned the perfidy in others. Survival was the terrain, language was mere map. The truth was the battleground, the lies of words were the army's sounds .*

This was data that appeared like a double rainbow, against a still tenebrous nimbus with white outlines here and black shadows there; and birds appeared at edge, birds that were afraid to fly too close to its omphalos. It felt like an ancient language deciphered, a *codex* from initiates of the gods who first lived on the earth as refugees of the 12th and passing planet. It lay in his mind like the monoliths half buried -half revealed- in the *Lebanese* quarries of *Baalbek* .

The weight of this data was estimated, not put on a scale; its purpose guessed at. How it was accomplished was not understood. It just was . *And it was ponderous* , Isaiah thought; he thought it was ponderous from all three levels of analysis. The black rock was now held between fore and thumb of the left hand. He squeezed it and felt his own fingertips feedback onto his brain. He breathed again.

He toyed with ideas; he thought of interventions to re-connect the body to the high-mind; to go beyond the mere repairing of criminal psychopathology but to fix large swaths of the professional classes, those managers and elites who made up the bulk of shot-callers and influencers. Isaiah was overcome with ideas.

What if all they needed was one bump up the ladder in IQ and a CRISPR cas-9 vector to effect this via neural apoptosis and increase in propagation speed - via a neural lubricant, like glycine or mucnat-4, combined with augmented upstream connectivity, in the cerebellar, limbic and enteric systems. What if I could effect that by building additional infrastructure of neural connections, and boring out those already extant? What if, Isaiah thought, these vectors could be introduced en masse, and out-patient, and have it re-organize the brain and brain-body connectome in an afternoon?

What if I could introduce one additional thing?

He thought of the training that would be required, the post-operative exercises like they performed on the inmates to re-train their brains for empathy. It came back to the metaphorized mind space, that phrase of Jaynes, the mind's capacity for metaphor squared, turned in on itself, to make a metaphor of itself.

Well, he thought with frission, what if these middlebrows could be given the extra cognition and the metaphoric training; be shown the power of narrative, story, myth and religion to encode their new Tao; their new praxis ? The intersection of thought and action; the path between emotion and reason; the thin callosum between two hemispheres , Isaiah delimited in silent thought. He saw a lone rider, on an east-west highway travelling between two states. He heard the exhaust, he saw the wind bevel the rider's edge. He felt the static of the electric. He felt the wind and rain upon his face. He breathed.

Religion was: *thou shall not* ; but once ignored -as man did now ignore religion- then the State had to enforce it with guns and prisons.

But what if man could return to mere moral suasion, by opening his eyes to his body below, and how he need not continue to insist on this lie of rationality in order to effect the new world? What if man, new man, could see his body for what it was: him; the total self? Like he sees his mind's eye,

that spot just behind the eyes as him -his total self- now . What if, he asked, thinking of the few examples he had seen, those he'd measured, those with high IQs and body awareness, body incorporation, what if man could fuse with his body and via the same trick of metaphorizing due to the connectivity of the corpus callosum, could metaphorize it all?

"If," Isaiah said aloud. Ifs eternal, he thought to himself. He held his breath.

What if man could be good in a religious sense again by merely being aware of his body in the most religious of ways? That was how the State would truly fall away. Government was necessary because men were not angels, as the saying went. What if men could in fact be angles, Isaiah asked as the lab's light changed phase again at this time of day and the shadows off Isaiah's hanging arms elongated and rose. The dark reflection of his form traveled back behind him upon the concrete floor like one wing of Lucifer and a shadow of one side of St. Michael's two-edged sword. The LEDs moved -it was their time to move- and Isaiah's shadows buzzed like flutterings of blackbirds with wings three times three.

Isaiah saw the genome laid out before him like a map to the grail, each spot in the forest darkest at entrance, each avatar of hero on roan-grey horseback -in matte black armor- attended by knight errant winds in his open sea of breast; nucleotides like ladder rungs, unzipped chromosomes like ropes of banyan trees laid down from cliffs above clouds in a shroud, enzymes with partners over and over, repeated a million and six times.

He saw it all laid out before him, like a people in search of adventure, across sea, across gap between lands, with tattooing from God in the palms of their hands.

The vision came.

Right then. He breathed.

He felt -at first- the pressure, then the heat of the face, the heart clinching -the ideas scattering like antelope as the lions rose from a crouch- and then -like rain on the plains- the tears first collected in clouds in his eyes, then -overwhelmed by the hydrostatic pressure of it- they fell in rivulets, in streams, condensed steam, in drops, down and off his face and he shook.

His body felt hot within and cold layered without, he felt his stomach and genitals roil in place, his arms sore and twitching in spasms, he heaved now and mouth fell agape, the room turned its lights down, he saw opaquely -convex- through water.

The vision was undistorted within.

He placed his hand out into the room as if warding off intervention, and placed his inner -metaphorized- hand on the map -placed it down firmly- as the mind's wind gusted its corners up and scattered the table and blew out the candles and lifted the corvids from their perches and the hawk from his men's arms and the map folded up over his wrist and hand like a *Dionaea* . And like his hand and arm were in the maw of a dragon, he pressed firmly -downward, unyieldingly- as incantations in languages of math and genomics and enzyme methylation poured out of his inner mouth and throat and answers disguised as God's wrath and Satan's solutions fluid and impermeable leaked out of his eyes.

But he was articulate, and unmoved, and his inner men stood their ground. Each man a brain region, a personality inside -organic, mute- but with arms and core and legs and heart all mottled and riven with striations from incessant laboring. They had been building this city inside.

He now could see he had been in this *cuidad* all along; the king's tent, the fires of camp, the workers, the soldiers, *centaurs* of each guarded the perimeter as he and his men unfurled again the map to reach the center of the forest; at four points most dark.

And his men, their arms and hands down on the corners of map -the winds now blowing at them and their backs- flattened it out. And each could see, it was a perfectly symmetrical legend with no up nor down, no left or right, but appeared the same from each side. Each man lifted their hand up at the palm edge and looked at what was under where they had laid down -in a mad burst to impede the wind- and there was their dark forest, the ragged treeline, their black figure just inside.

Each knew that this was where they must enter the forest. Isaiah -with his right hand in the center of the unfurled map- and his men's four hands at each four corner saw the outline of the center of maze within the map; the unknown, the unknowable, what no true map hid: he lifted his hand and saw

that the center was blank, a tea-stained and foxed center in the shape of his hand. They would reach it, each from their own unwanted entrance, with fear and loathing in their hearts and balls and thus squeezing about their eyes.

And, he thought, he knew, when they arrived it would be unlike anything known, a total fucking surprise . Et pourtant les cadavers des merchants et des faineants tombent sur le Coeur des autres , he thought and also said aloud, “and yet the corpses of the wicked and the sluggards fall on the Hearts of others.”

And Isaiah knew their names, his Jacks, would command their Daniels, who would lead the 1.6 million to war.

All were first among equals and yet would take orders from those above; along the scales of the expanding ouroboros asp. *It was mathematically - and thus biologically and thus poetically- perfect, he thought. It required trust only; specialization, eusociality, not anything else. Their genomes would all be the same. Only their jobs would be different. And Blax, now alone in the forest would be at the top, vacillating, unsure, the yin-yang of their archetype, the one most conflicted, and he would be what the Jacks needed.*

And they would be what the Daniels required. And it would all travel down to Matthews and then the clones who had no bottom for they would buoy the king: Blax. They would lift his body up and preserve his soul in honey and glass and bury it in the forest as his bride gave birth to the world.

She the queen, he saw, with barely yet a thought. He saw her swim inside the quarry water, the halo waiting for her head.

The inmate hovered inside Isaiah as archetype above -once removed- from it all. It would be the Bust who relieved him of command. It would be the Queen of Spades who would trump the Ace and let him find final respite. Isaiah could see where this body -this body of intellect- would lay to rest. Isaiah smiled as he saw how it would make him also more; he too would gain from this as his *limbic* region would augment and become dynamic - and chaotic- with the inmate living inside him one day soon.

Isaiah smiled at the thought of days to come. He smiled at the hive, the Jacks, the Queen, the ovum.

MO turned and saw Isaiah standing with his left hand splayed and vascular and like a beak of some bird in flight -his arm out-stretched perpendicular to his frame- his eyes black and wet, his face shiny in downward streams. A pool, was now seen -and at his feet- of at least 90ml; his cheeks flush -speaking in tongues- as only numbers and chemical code and periodic table *argot* came from his throat. The right hand was balled and had the rune at swaddled core.

MO never thought of madness, only error or mistake.

Isaiah thought then of art. He heard the inmate say: I promised myself I'd never allow anyone to steal from me again. Never would I allow lies... and you have lied and stolen both; it's time for the castle to fall into the moat.

III. 2020 e.v.

"Morning Lyndon," MO said and began scanning him for anything anomalous while he allowed Isaiah to work on the wall. "Any dreams?"

"Well, I slept barely two hours; we had a guy on the block get sick and was up puking all night; the guards refused to take him to the infirmary and so I had one of those infuriating nights of sleeping for eight minutes then waking up and realizing you've been asleep for eight minutes. Jesus, it's horrid.

"But, I must make mention of one thing; now that I've thought of it. I've had the most ornate and temporarily elongated dreams in those short cycles. Now explain this, how can I go right into REM sleep for such a short duration, where I'm objectively only asleep for eight minutes -I know because of the cell block clock- and yet I have a dream in that period that feels like hours. It has space and time.

"Anyway, I'll let you answer that with your big brain in a minute, but I dreamed -dreamt?- anyway I dreamt I was in New Zealand speaking with my grandfather, only it wasn't my actual grandfather, it was Wulf and then Arol came over; and then I remembered in the dream that I had had a dream at twenty-one or twenty-two of this exact nature. I mean," he emphasized

this, “*in the dream* I remembered that what was happening reminded me of a previous dream,” the inmate said; the brow furrowed. He stretched the neck and squinted the eyes. He hurt at the upper part of his spine.

“Recursion,” MO said. He discounted self-reports; but he didn’t dismiss them *en toto* .

“Exactly, and I remembered at Zendik -when I was at Zendik, two years after having that dream, that first dream- I remembered I had had that dream before I even knew who Wulf and Arol were. But see, I was an atheist at that point. I had been one for three or four years and so I dismissed premonitions as irrational, as suspect, as explained by other means.

“But, worse than that, I was embarrassed to admit to even entertaining the notion that I had a premonition of Wulf and Arol. All of this was of course made worse by the fact that I was joining a cult; not exactly a thing I could justify based purely on rationalist or political grounds. Although that is exactly what I tried to do.

“Shit, even when at Zendik I stripped it of its religious significance; its mysticism. I made it all political and thus boring. I truly missed the point of that place; and it pains me to this day. Even the,” the inmate began but was interrupted.

“You have credited it with being a *Rubicon* ; a *zeitgeist* shifting moment for you,” MO broke in. The *DTI* data was streaming into the corporate cloud and MO’s interface as well. The backlog of each memory the inmate had MO collected as engrams and rebuilt them as entire narratives and stored them on the PraXis cloud. MO could now build narrative from this point on.

“Yeah, even though -as I was going to say- even though it was the single most important year in my life -the single most important place in my life- even though it changed everything, it did so in spite of -not because of- my atheism. I could have received so much more if I was -if I could have been- open to it. But, whatever,” the inmate said. He shrugged the shoulders but a stinger ran from behind the ear to his elbow on the left side. He held still and tried to show no pain response.

“You are consistent,” Isaiah said as MO toggled between the inmate’s *parietal* lobe and *pineal* gland.

“How?” the inmate asked through jaws clamping down on the tongue at back; the neck frozen in place.

“Well, if you mean what are the symptoms -and not the mechanisms- I will lay them out; you are as hard on yourself as you are others; that is probably what makes you even half way palatable to people. You judge yourself very harshly. I mean, you must forget -in order to say such things- you must forget that you were merely twenty-four when you arrived at Zendik. You knew nothing; nothing about being human,” MO said.

“You were raised by computers for *christsake* ,” Isaiah said from the wall as he sprayed the leaves by the southern vines. He loved using that joke; then saying, “and yet you developed a humanity anyway. But you cannot let go of the fact that you could have been more open to radical paradigm shifting. It’s comical.”

“Look,” the inmate said with mild vex, “I know ok? But, the way my brain works is to locate error; that is what my brain does. It finds error. And if I had it to do over again I would have been more open to the mystical experience. Especially since I was already primed for it; it wouldn’t have been totally artificial. I mean, I’m a rationalist in many ways, I’m not credulous in domains that many men are. I look for rational explanations for things first; not numinous ones.

“But, that’s not the same thing as saying that I think all life is mathematics and bio-chemistry.

“I am not built that way. I actually feel the qualia of the religious man; I feel love as transcendent, redemptive, possible.” When he said such things his voice caught, his eyes became hot, his chest couldn’t find enough air to power the lungs, enough blood to charge the heart. He thought of her again. And he refused to name her. He blinked fast.

He refused to sully her with his own dangerous ideas. He refused to share her with them. He protected her by not thinking of her. He knew his thoughts were deadly. But she had in fact killed him long ago. And he knew it was both their fault.

“I think,” the inmate went on, “friendship could be real, and larger; more important than life itself. I think the good, *capital -g- good* , could be a higher purpose for man than merely reproducing one’s self in the Marxist sense and reproduction in the Darwinian sense too. I think one brief -but true- moment *is worth a lifetime of lies* .”

“Why,” Isaiah asked, “suppress the *a-rational* ; that is a word I am using in lieu of *ir-rational* , for now; why suppress it?”

MO remained silent and let the data absorb into the cloud. Each electrical explosion along a trillion neurons all loaded in compressed data in his expanding and capacious mind. He built new folders for new engrams, the memories of mere seconds ago, the connections the inmate built between decimal places.

MO slid each memory -deconstructed and rebuilt- over the commissure of the cloud to Isaiah who took it in -seamlessly- without ever naming it at all. Isaiah just knew new things that MO had given him; and he knew not from whence it came.

Neither cared that it went -sometimes- the other way.

“I don’t know, it seemed maybe as if I was disciplining myself. Just as I had stopped drugs and begun exercising, and being more,” the inmate paused, the chains clinked as he raised his hands to their limit, “well, disciplined. But, who knows? I mean, part of it must be not wanting to feel like a dupe. I think I’m often ruled by this fear of being the butt of the joke; and not for no reason. I mean, people have been getting over on me forever.”

The inmate admitted to his weaknesses as a show of strength. He figured to acknowledge his flaws, admit to them -name them- was the one thing truly strong men could shoulder. But it bent him each time he said such things aloud. He saw the oxen in the field, the peasant loaded by the *vigneron* . He saw the sea-bottom under all that ocean. He pushed the head forward as if to unload the neck.

“This was a large part of the target selection process, yes?” MO asked checking the historical brain scans whenever the murders came up; he was tracking new lateral CNS conditions and second order bio-chemistry *vis-à-*

vis the man's mental and corporeal state when reflecting upon his transgressions of State law.

"Yeah, I envisioned them laughing it up at my expense, you bet. That was huge. So, and I know this is innate to humans -men and certain types of males especially- I know it's part of the biological-psychological matrix, but I still think I have a personal -unique- dislike of it.

"It rules me more than it should; I mean I have my more elevated moments when I think: *who cares what they think; like in real life, who cares?* Like, I ask myself, *do I care what the birds think?*

"Oh, that reminds me, one time I heard a bird kind of cawing, you know, doing its calls and it sounded like laughter almost and I got angry; I really did, like I felt he was laughing at me. That is when I knew I was insane," the inmate laughed and MO smiled in the background, and Isaiah did too. More data loaded up the cloud.

To have him say such things was delightful for reasons that would not occur to most. He was being totally sincere and vulnerable and making fun of himself all in one shot. And he did it over something that *anyone who was honest would understand*, Isaiah thought as he let his hands juggle the small stone. *Everyone thought nature -the cosmos- mocked them at some point. What could one do but laugh?*

"Anyway, there is the predilection to say, *oh, who cares what so and so thinks*, but not really mean it; say it, but not mean it. For we do care; I don't know anyone that means that when they say it. Everyone cares. And then there is the larger, deeper, more intelligent and philosophical truth to the statement. I mean this. Why should I ever care what someone thinks? Especially if it -their contempt- will never harm me as they are too cowardly to do anything with their derision? Right?

"These guys were never going to come to me and fuck with my life. It was all over with. And this is something nobody gets. I mean even -especially- the people who look at my actions as barbaric and unjustified, even these people stay awake at night worrying if they are liked or respected or blah blah.

“I mean, nobody is *insouciant* to reputation building or managing. People, look, people are, well, we need each other. And this means that social reputation, gossiping, back-stabbing, all that has material impact on one’s life. It’s not a vacuous point, and it cannot be waved away with the hand by mere philosophy. And while I agree that a man can technically live just fine even with whispers behind his back -even if he ignores it and never feel any actual harm if he is elevated and *blasé* enough, all that granted- the fact is that this is not how man is built. A man’s *neo-cortex* can be above what others think, but his deep mind, his old brain feels it like a stab in the gut.

“Unless you are sociopath you do care what people think. Period.

“And I can dismiss a lot, a lot; but at my core I still care what people think. Otherwise, why even talk, why ever explain yourself. Why ever build a justification at all?

“Look, there are real material effects that result from gossip that is not responded to, right? It breeds further mistrust and influences how ancillary people will treat you,” he felt he needed an example to prove his point. He felt like justifying his idea that men need to justify their ideas.

“Oh, I know, here’s an example: when Jeremy and that little tiny guy, what’s his -Dean, that’s right- Dean and Danny and that fat guy I forget his name, the piercer from Louisiana -Kevin or whatever- look, when they talked shit about me, the new guy -the Mexican, the chubby transsexual guy or whatever- he was -he told me, when I asked- he told me that he was quitting All Heart Industry because they had talked so much shit about me that he believed it.

“And he admitted that I’d always treated him fairly and decently, he admitted it. But, he was so weak, -such a follower- that he was converted by gossip against me; gossip alone. So, I know, believe me. And I know for a fact that Sarah’s shit-talk about me influenced Mike to betray me,” the inmate said. He’d veer in a conversation quickly -massively- just like he drove moving forward bypassing slower cars as if mere obstacles and not alive and moving too.

But, that didn’t mean he didn’t cut it too close. That didn’t mean he misjudged what was important and what was not; what moved at speeds he could misjudge.

“How?” Isaiah was thinking of chimp troops and how everything this man said linked up to every field study done on human’s cousin the common chimp. But, he also knew the inmate was no alpha, and that something else was going on. Isaiah let his own thoughts migrate to the inmate, seeing what would come about from the recursion from himself to the man in chains and back.

“She made me look weak, making up all manner of shit, and to be honest, saying some true things too -I have vulnerabilities, weaknesses of course- but she would gild a lily, man. And she told him all manner of shit that made him think he could get away with betraying me. I know this.

“This is basic chimpanzee philosophy; the alpha is attacked as soon as he is perceived as weak. It need not be true -his weakness- but merely perceived. He need only be perceived as weak and then the betas will attack. That is why alphas spend so much time and energy on reputation building, on masculinity, *probative masculinity displays* ; and if idiotic shitheads like Stan Goff cannot see why we must, then they deserve what they get,” he added with a grimace.

“Stan Goff, that’s a bit of *non sequitur* ,” MO said. He saw Isaiah was priming him; he ignored it.

“Oh, that’s where I first heard of *probative masculinity displays* , he was critiquing men for showing off their power. But he should have known better; weakness is an attractor for violence. You project power to avoid conflict, not encourage it. Perceived weakness is what causes conflict,” the inmate said. He breathed heavily from the nose. He looked about the room.

“That is true 93% of the time; now, what about John and Jason?” MO asked.

“Oh, yeah, they pounced as soon as I was hemmed in by the courts, the probation allowed them to steal all my stuff; yup,” he shook his head. The inmate saw this as another example. He felt it spoke for itself.

“And this was because they perceived you as weak?” MO asked.

“Yes, hemmed in by the State; they figured I’d do nothing out of fear of violating my probation. And look, they were not wrong. But, they forgot that I could outlive my probation. I guess they figured I’d get over it in that

twenty-four month period. Well, surprise,” he said with a smile; and again the hands raised against the taut -dark grey- chains.

“Yeah, they were wrong about you getting over it. That is certain. How much money did you get from that robbery homicide?” MO asked monitoring dopamine in the inmate when a memory of cash acquisition instantiated in the man’s mind. MO was building a new algorithm for this. The data -the man’s answer- would help build it. Each time a story was told, a memory revisited, the brain fired and MO could measure a new part.

MO built a 3D, and a 4D model from this like sonar sent then received information. Each re-lived memory built a model for the cloud.

“Shit, not much, they were the two worst Jewish business men in the Jew world; shit, in the *goyim* world. I am not kidding, I have never seen two Jews with less business acumen in my life. You know how they ended up with a million dollars?” he paused as Isaiah smiled waiting for the punchline, “by starting out with two million dollars. Those idiots lost more money -faster and with more efficiency- than any two Jews since Cain and Abel.”

“Did Cain or Abel lose money? I thought they did ok,” MO asked.

“I just meant since that time. It was not a good analogy, I agree. Forget it. But seriously, those two bastards from the levant had no money sense at all; and -it would be like watching an Asian not be able to politely bow or a black dude not know how to wear a solid-gold suit or something- anyway, I got very little from their safe. And the safe was fucking huge, like a ten by ten picture frame for -a ten-foot by ten-foot picture frame- for a four-inch by six-inch photograph.

“That safe was huge and empty. They deserved what they got just based on that alone. Eyes bigger than their stomach,” he added with contempt as the *PFC* lit up in thirteen places of interest to MO. The cloud seeded more and more; it grew heavy in zones 2b through 5d . MO built a new zone.

“John’s father was a multi -is a- multi-millionaire, so he had the genes for it,” the inmate added. Isaiah ran the database for metrics on the father.

“But, who knows, maybe,” the inmate paused, “maybe he got the bad genes. Sexual reproduction is a crap shoot. Look at me and my brother, I

mean, I'm more similar to you," he pointed to Isaiah, with just the finger, the hands hemmed in by the cuffs, "than him. Me and that dude share almost no DNA." The inmate said this with some gratitude and regret it seemed.

MO was attempting to measure how he felt about it as he spoke to the inmate.

"Well, you share more than you think; but it is true that it is not 50% as is average for bothers. You got a sixty-forty split with your father and he got the inverse so your already at 40% and then the ones you got from you father were only 34% similar to the ones he got, so that makes you -on the Y chromosome- nearly 73% dissimilar. It has to do with the meiosis process; it's complicated. But it's not as if you're like cousins," MO said as he reviewed each genome.

"Yeah, well -and he's- because of his personality he never accumulated any depth, so our vectors began at different points on the graph and only increased in deviation from there," the inmate said based on instinct alone.

"Can you answer one last question for me?" Isaiah asked.

"Shoot," the inmate said smirking.

"Why have you changed your opinion on religion; your prison intake form has *atheist* listed as your religion; which is rare for prison. Many inmates are functional atheists but not self-avowed ones. Expound," Isaiah asked.

"When you remove religion, something must take its place; and *Nietzsche* and *Dostoyevsky* both saw what *the Author* could only hint at, for he was right in the middle of the attempted murder of God and the resulting punitive death of man as a creature of awe as the *Pequod* went down. It was nihilism which was coming.

"The Author was angry, retributive. Anyway, the rationalists and scientists have lost God not out of pique but out of optimization. Remember what *Laplace* said when asked where God was in his model; he said his model of the universe seemed to work *without Him* .

"Look, if you flick matches you best have a fire extinguisher handy. In the oil field we had fire watch -anytime we welded or whatever- we had a plan in place if a fire broke out. We didn't wait for the fire before we come up

with the fucking plan,” the inmate said this with demotic syntax and the southern drawl came with it.

“Being transgressive is fine as long as you have a plan in place to restore order; and the communists had no plan to restore the order of religious dogma. They had just more chaos and so it created tyranny -the tourniquet-to staunch the bleeding of their nihilism. And now, the post modernists have torn it all down, all of it.

“Under the rules of the hipster irony *gestapo* , even human feeling is suspect. Thus, it’s imprisoned or dead. Melannie killed loved; she had a heart but she had a knife too. Chen would never shut up about all human traits just being apps; that morality had no meaning. The only time he cared about morality is when anyone pushed back. The original crimes were always allowable under the idea that none of it mattered. But as soon as someone pushed back he said it was immoral.

“The reason was clear: they are all throwing a tantrum. Tearing it all down in rhetoric, since the machine of society was too strong for them to literally take down. This is the post-modernist *cri de guerre* : quote, *we can’t destroy the system in real life, we’re too weak; but we can make it uncool to be patriotic, or religious or believe in true love. So, look out, because we just ruined your good time* , unquote. I have thrown many a tantrum; I know the symptoms. But, I can see the error of my ways in others too. I can locate in them what is bad in me,” the inmate watched Isaiah study the green wall as he spoke; he breathed deeply to reset his mind. He again tried to move the head from off the center of the neck.

“And the irony is that they *can* tear it down. I mean the indices of social health are very low,” MO said as the meta-data on suicide, depression, incarceration, male-female relations, race-relations, *inter alia* , were all falling. The data fell in a cascade in his mind like easily recalled memories from one second ago.

“Oh, look,” the inmate concurred, “no doubt, this is crucial. They can tear it all down, just not in some grand martial way. They ain’t the Red Army.

“They do the war of attrition, the war of a thousand cuts; that is their thing. But that gives them too much credit, they are just flailing. But, like Sarah, she was just flailing too, and she brought me down, the king of the jungle

was laid low by a starved, stupid, crazy, flailing hyena. This is the irony of life; grand things can be laid low by ignoble things. Sarah -and myself- are proof of that,” the inmate said.

“Do you ever regret leaving her alone?” Isaiah asked. He felt like he shouldn’t have asked that as soon as it came out. He thought of introducing an engram distortion aerosol *via* a *nanobot* to erase it in the inmate’s mind; but he declined on moral grounds. *Let the question stand*, he thought. He counted -again- the crew of the ship -the *Pequod* - in his head as he watched vapor from the misters fall above the ivy.

“No. I think it would be ungallant to kill a woman, *for me* to kill a woman,” he said.

“Well, you killed Kathrine -the brother Stephen and the sister Kathrine- up in Northglenn,” MO said.

“Yeah, but that was business. They were; that had nothing to do with love or sex or betrayal between man and woman. She was just wrong and had to go. If I had ever fucked her then I would not have killed her. That is my heuristic I guess; now that you’ve made me explain,” he laughed. He paused and thought. “Because I killed Michelle too,” he said and felt some chagrin.

“That’s right, in Grand Junction, Michelle Rodriguez,” MO said as he ran her genome from the blood data; her biography from police reports.

“Yeah, and look, I killed Alicia Cardenas as well. And I did technically fuck her, but dude, that bitch was demonic. Wow, I guess I did not consider those three to be women, not in the normal sense. They were just dudes with tits I guess. Which, now that I think about it, I guess I should have killed Sarah. I guess my reasons are not as clear as I thought,” he was pensive now; his own contradictions laid bare. It made his metabolism rise; blood pressure too. His allostatic system began to roil at the pull of the moon of his hypocrisy and lies.

His big lies were tucked deep inside; but the crack in the *façade* was enough to make him nervous about the whole thing.

“Yeah, I’ve wondered about it; since she seemed the lynch pin; I mean she was the number one reason it all fell apart. She really was your *bête noire*

,” MO said of Sarah Smith.

“Yeah, I don’t know why I didn’t lay a hand on her. I don’t. I’ll have to study on it,” the inmate said. His whole insides had changed, darkened, his words failed him. His eyes seemed to take in less light. He felt confused and wounded, and his memories recurred and would not play out in linear fashion at all. He too thought of the ship foundering out at sea, and each crewmen; the captain; *Bildad* and *Peleg* back at home. His brain counted crewmen but stopped at Bulkington as Isaiah spoke.

“Can we go back to this idea of a creature of awe,” Isaiah said, half wanting to change the subject, half genuinely curious.

“You picked up on that, *eh?* ” the inmate said with a smile. He was attempting to hide his pain and spoke in short words and short sentences now as he tried to re-group. MO measured it all and timestamped the allostatic data to the cloud.

“Of course. I pick up on everything,” Isaiah said with a smirk to which the inmate agreed to with a nod.

“Yeah, yeah, well, look, when an animal -a prey animal- sees a predator he -his hairs- stand on end, right?” he said as began to breathe again. He forced out -first- the bad air and then breathed in through the nose.

“Piloerection,” MO clarified.

“Exactly, and that’s *awe* ,” inmate 16180339 said as he felt the brain come back on line. “That is more than fear, that is awe. Fear is part of awe, but it is a necessary element not a sufficient one. Awe is something more. Fear plus reverence for the doom that is possible. I can fear a man, a mere mortal, whom I do not think can kill me, or annihilate me or send me to Hell; I can fear him but not be in awe of him. But God? God is awe inspiring because he has the power of doom.”

“Damnation,” Isaiah said.

“Yes, but more like the power to make you turn on yourself, the power to make you give up, the power to perform alchemy on your bio-chemistry,” the inmate said.

“Evocative; I think I get it. Sometimes I get the feeling it’s as if you’re saying, *if you don’t get this metaphor you don’t get the point*, ” Isaiah spoke in almost total earnestness.

“If one doesn’t get that an analogy is deep information, well, it’s like not seeing the resemblance between father and son. Or seeing it and thinking it’s random,” the inmate said. Isaiah nodded and MO reset his group-b *nanobots* that traveled many miles away -above the above arctic circle-measuring methane release and the weight of ice. They had pinged him as they grew full of data from the top of the world.

“Awe is something we’ve lost,” the inmate paused. He then said, “I was just thinking though, if awe, if awe were to return, it would be,” he looked down and in nebulous thought, went silent.

“Awesome?” Isaiah finished. He then began again, trying to get at the thing they always missed, the thing the inmate hid. He asked, “why do this? Why consign yourself to prison; it makes no sense.”

“*Sit jus liceat que perie poetis* ,” Lyndon said with some practice it seemed.

“*Horace* , from *Ars Poetic* : *the poet has the right to kill himself* ,” Isaiah said as he nodded. Each of the forty-six names and profiles of the inmate’s victims populated the next shuffling of data from MO to Isaiah again, this time with genetic updates to each of the dead. The data passed like all their kites, silently and without mention.

“That is it; you know in that same poem *Horace* goes on to say that men of letters have obviously committed some crime, evidenced by their fate, saddled with the punishment, with the gift, the curse of poetry of soul,” he said and the room was quiet in his ears; the green latticed concrete walls grew slowly -too slowly for the inmate to notice- and the *Hymenoptera* and *Trochilidae* flew and crawled in the gaps of the ivy; the morning glories began to re-open to the LED rhythm of the lab’s lights.

“I was burdened so with a poetical mind and heart; with language, metaphor, the abstraction of what constitutes the good life. I never found material objects enough; nor *cliché* relationships of mundane transactions sufficient; and the banality of life just could not hold me. What worse fate is there?

“I needed more; and this is something men who are slaked by cars and homes and wives that pretend to love them, by friends who pretend to like them -by a life they themselves pretend to like- well, my needs are something men like that cannot comprehend. I seem glum, unfriendly, unwilling to have a good time.

“These guys, they never need look deeper, beneath the mask. But I must *strike through that pasteboard mask, even if it is naught beyond*,” he said this with a nod which Isaiah recognized and was beginning to understand as each metaphor worked like a virus in his mind; boring out tunnels, catacombs inside his own mind space. Isaiah could even watch and notice the expansion of mind in real time. Unlike most men -even clever men- he could watch himself become more and more aware.

He found himself now agreeing with the inmate, that this mindset was -in fact- a curse for the man -if one was merely one man, alone in this world- *for he necessarily set himself up against the world*, Isaiah thought, *with this need for poetry, for meaning in life . This is why artists killed themselves in the end; they had to choose art over life for one always had to choose between the epic and the banal* . This was why *the Author* called his narrator *Ishmael*, Isaiah now saw.

Isaiah pulled that name out of the crew and kept it -and the Captain- sequestered from the forty-four shipmates. He built a little folder in the mind.

But, if a man could command more than that of one man, then maybe it would be a fairer fight, and the poet would not have need of throwing himself into the lava of Mount Etna . Maybe, Isaiah thought, *he could both live and still have a life.*

26. The Thief is Satisfied with Diamonds...

So humble insider her virgin body, inside her virgin mind Blackhawk
[Zendik, Wulf]

There are virtually limitless ways of reversibly altering protein structures and interactions with cellular molecules, including DNA and other proteins. Thus, it should not be difficult to envisage the construction of enormously complex computational circuits in living cells 21st Century Evolution
[Shapiro, James]

The man who kills a man, kills a man. The man who kills himself, kills all men; as far as he is concerned he wipes out the world Orthodoxy
[Chesterton, GK]

I. 2020 e.v.

“Beach me on his back, goddamn it,” the Governor said as his driver nodded sideways as if agreeing to something he was already doing; the SUV whined and rattled as the augmented exhaust gurgled underneath them both.

The traffic was light, but he still had to navigate it without hitting anything; the Judge’s car was three lights ahead. The Governor was leaning forward in his seat and the white *Escalade* of the Judge was both sought and seeking; the Judge was hated, and he hated back. The Governor imagined the heat when they finally met and he most imagined the eyes and the hands and the ground under their feet. He let the vision fill in the rest in between.

His driver was official police and had been suited & tied -for this detail- for four months. He had found the Governor to be weird. The young girls were bad enough -they were cold and they never looked at him- *but this chasing down people -civilians- thing seemed odd*, he thought as he accelerated into the waves of traffic.

They hit a green light and he pressed the accelerator harder and it downshifted into second. They began to gain on the GMC; about fifty-feet away now.

“That motherfucker,” Sou said and banged on the dash. In anticipation of their pulling aside of him the executive took off his safety belt. They closed in as the white SUV turned right onto 17th and as the dinging of the seat belt alarm went off Boyd told it to *-fuck off-* making the driver recoil slightly as if it *-this insult-* was meant for him. The Governor *-cursing the fates or inanimate objects-* always made everyone feel like his insults were meant for them.

He always paid for everyone’s dinner and *-also-* he insulted *writ large* .

The white SUV stopped and the Judge got out at the corner. Boyd opened the door of his own vehicle and the driver slowed as much as he could; but the momentum let the executive out in forced a jog. The door bounced against its bushing; the driver stared at the vector of the man he was in charge of getting from A to B. The Governor barked, “*Marcucci* ,” as the judge ignored him and scurried into the building on Broadway and 17th .

“Hey, you son of bitch,” Boyd barked again as people on the street recognized him *-and smiled-* and yet couldn’t quite approach him either due to his tone. Their affect was warm, their body stopped on the sidewalk or by the columns. He pulled the western entrance door nearly off its hinges and jogged across the lobby as some lady tried to stop him with open hands and short words. He went around her and told her to *fuck off* and people gasped and found it difficult to do anything but pause *-freeze-* in their own movements. The judge went through an inner door and into a room on the first floor. The Governor pulled that door open just as it had closed and barked again, “*Marcucci* .”

The man turned around and looked at him like he didn’t know the Governor of his own state.

“Hey, you ducking me?” the Governor asked him with pique.

“No sir, can I help you?” he said with a detached air of those willing to hear you out, but unlikely to help you at all; the one most people affect as if they never had any idea what exactly was going on.

“Judge, I don’t have time to paly grab ass with you. I need you to start issuing holds on all these illegals; the PR bond bullshit ends today. Ok?” Boyd Sou said.

“Look, I do not work for you. I work for the people of Colorado,” the Judge said with his own hatred repressed into the tissue. He refused to admit there was a law outside the law; he was confident like those who live within high walls; those that forget the jungle too grows tall as it stretches for the light the walls occlude. He didn’t admit there were laws that governed cells, dictum down below, and *writs* even lower than that.

“Asshole, you are letting cartel thugs escape our jurisdiction after lawful arrests on schedule-one dealing charges. If you let one more go I’ll find a way to ruin your meal,” Sou said and put his hands on his hips brushing away the olive drab jacket that covered his firearm.

“Excuse me?” the judge said as he saw the pistol.

“You fucking heard me you cocksucker. I ain’t a normal fucking Governor. I’m out for blood. And I asked nice three times and you gave me the high hand; now I’m pissed. So, now that I am pissed I am no longer interested in your faggy bullshit. You will issue *holds* on each of them; my AG will be at those bail reviews; and it will go smooth from here on out. Or, I will put my dick in your meal.”

“I am not used,” the judge began as the executive interrupted.

“Look, I’m not used to an illegal alien loving *homo* being allowed to rule on anything in my state, but I have you now don’t I? So, we all *gotta* acclimate. Now, do it or go to war with me. I do not care which, because either way I will keep those scum in jail; with you on the bench or with you locked up for treason.

“I’ll find a way, motherfucker. I’ll find a way.

“I don’t play by the rules at all, not even close. I’m an entrepreneur, and we do not play by the rules. You fags that have sucked cock all your life to get to where you are have no idea how many cocks I’ve cut off when some motherfucker put it in my face. I run this state, and that means I run you. You don’t believe me, cool, then go ahead and let the next illegal out on PR bond and see what I do. I half hope you do it you goddamn *homo*. I hope you do so I can teach you a lesson on what war really is,” he grabbed the man by his shirt collar and barked like a dog in his face as the judge recoiled and almost fell down in his own footprint.

The Governor turned and -buttoning his jacket- walked away.

He exited the building as people milled about getting coffee and doing no actual work. He saw the black SUV -with black wheels and no badging- parked at the corner where the white SUV used to be and he changed his gait and direction to meet it.

He was off to the DEA next. He had an appointment with Barbara Roach the woman in charge of that agency in Denver and he had a list of forty-one names he took from his pocket as he got into the vehicle. He told the driver where to go. Sou read their names under the headings of each country or origin, first Mexico, *Jose Tapi-Rubio; Selestino Hernandez-Mayo; Freddy Paz-Herrer* , *some fuck named “Bancholas ”*, he finally said aloud. *Rodrigo Mora-Sanchez* and on and on, he read, as he grew madder and more intent on making a scene as the traffic blew by them like a wake.

The driver sped without instruction; he knew the mood of the man. The buildings passed and people on the street went about their business unawares as their Governor was on a war path all seemingly locked inside that black SUV for now. It was like a bullet shot: all the malice in the compressed lead. Everything it passed was unaware of what it was capable of; only the thing it landed upon would know the truth.

El Salvador, Lara Zamora-Cruz, Caludia Lisseth-Lara, Vilma L Zamora, and on and on, he read. *Half of these were naturalized citizens, they had been allowed into the country legally for christsake* , he thought.

When they arrived an apparatchik came to escort them to Ms. Roach's office and Boyd Sou left his driver in the lobby and told him to watch the car. The DEA building was moved out to Centennial by the Cherry Creek State Park in some LEED building of glass and metal beams of Peoria. *It was stupid and over built*, he thought, and as he moved it made him sick to even walk around these lit up halls.

Barbara Roach greeted him from behind her desk; no doubt to show some kind of status that he refused to recognize. He shook her hand and as her number-one leaned against the side wall the Governor began, “Look, what's going on with all these Mexicans and Salvadorans and all these goddamn names?” he said as he removed his list from his pocket and laid it on her desk.

She took it and read it and nodded and said yes , that they -these names- were indicted yesterday.

“But *where* are they?” the Governor asked as if for the second time.

“Well, we are in the process of apprehending them, Governor,” she said.

“Really, you are in the process? Like you’ll have them all in four or five minutes or never?” he asked with a slight drawl.

“Well, look, these things take time, but the indictment was first, and,” she began.

The number-one broke in. “I know you have no law enforcement background, so it’s opaque to you,” he began as the Governor now interrupted him.

“Son, nothing is opaque to me. I see the whole cosmos clearly. And these indictments are junk; they’re a show of force; dope on the table. These people are ghosts and you know it. They are back in the jungles of *Mexico* or *Nicaragua* making cocaine paste and babies. And the cartels are sending new people to take their place; shit, the new people are already here I bet. Which cartel did these people work for?” he asked.

“*Sinaloa* we believe,” Barbara said.

“You believe, ok, well, I ripped the judge’s ass forty-minutes ago, and my AG has a whole new perspective on life now. He will make sure to be up and at ‘em at *o’dark thirty* for all bail reviews on foreign nationals. But the DEA must -repeat, must- work hand-in-glove with us on any one that passes through our system. Nine out of ten names on that list where in our custody in the last fourteen months, did you know that?”

“We are aware that some of them had criminal records,” she said.

“Ma’am, we had them. We had them in custody during the time you were investigating them. I know this because you people do not do anything quickly, right? I mean let’s be real, if a person gets indicted by you that means you’ve been looking at them for at least a year and probably two, right?”

“Well, that depends,” she said.

“Look, from now on, if you are watching someone, and they are an illegal, tell me, and I’ll hold them for you. I’ll personally have the sheriff hold them until you can pick them up. Ok?” the Governor said.

“Well, as you know there are protocols for this,” she said.

“Are you not wanting to arrest them, is this some double-bind study to reinsert them into the operation down there? If that is it then hey, I’ll back off,” the Governor said.

“If -even if- that were true we couldn’t talk about it. We are happy to work with your AG and you directly sir if that is what you want, but the sanctuary status of Denver makes it difficult to circumnavigate detainer *writs* and judge’s orders and the ACLU. We cannot just detain people on your say so; or our say so. It’s more complicated than that,” she said and laid the pen she had picked up for no reason back on the desk.

“I know, I have been in the private sector my whole life, and when we need to do something, we do it. And in government when something needs done you talk about it and then figure out the best way to make sure it never gets done. I get it. Have a good day,” he said and rose and walked out and down as the DEA escort tried to catch up to him.

Ms. Roach and her number-one pretended -by ignoring it and speaking briefly on other matters- that what the Governor had just said was both of no importance and untrue.

II. 2020 e.v.

“I guess what I’m saying is that if creation is God’s art project -His creation- well, then the beauty of it is no accident nor ancillary or frivolous or shallow aspect. The beauty of creation is part and parcel; it’s fundamental to its purpose,” the inmate said as MO marked the brain scans with digital reminders and had the *nanobots* release dyes into his blood stream. Isaiah was writing in grey chalk on his blackboard as the inmate spoke.

“And me, as an artist, I seek to emulate God’s ways. I seek to honor God by creating with homage to that idea; the idea that all creation is beautiful. Like *chiaroscuro* , even the death and destruction is part of the beauty,

right? The black is what makes the light,” the inmate said seeking approval from the machines.

“Now,” MO began, “earlier you said man must bring good into the world, and that evil is the manifestation of when man fails to do this.”

“Ah, yes, but as the philosopher says, you have to be blind to not see the hand that kills with leniency,” the inmate said to MO. He had said this nineteen times to-date; he thought it was novel each time.

“Explain,” MO said as the knocks of chalk against the board were heard here and there; Isaiah continuing to scribble while they spoke.

“Well, to the average shithead all death is wrong and ugly and blah blah. But, look, when you witness an apex predator like a tiger take down a gazelle -as violent and beastly and sanguinary a phenomenon as that is- it is also shockingly -arrestingly- beautiful. When a bully gets his ass pounded by his victim we all cheer the retribution. There’s a whole *YouTube* channel dedicated to this very thing.

“Man is not as dedicated to peace as he claims. But he does claim it.

“I admire the Cuban revolution, despite its horrid communist evil. Why? Because *Batista* had it coming, man. Every right-winger I know admits this in whispers. They know why commies exist. They hate them -I hate the pinko fucks, too- but ultimately all men know why the commie arises from the soil: because the capitalist and the feudal lord is wicked; and people will fight back. And those people will not fight fair.

“Man loves violence, aesthetically, morally, he applauds it if it be just; marked by justice. We know this, and only the most extreme pacifists contradict this. But most people think some coercion and violence is beautiful -as in the case of the mammalian predator or the human victim fighting back- or at least satisfying morally -if not aesthetically- as when the cops slap the cuffs on some crook.

“When a forest fire or a hurricane or an exploding lightning bolt blows up a tree, it is all mouths agape, soul and eyes and balls all wedded to this beauty; this beauty in this horror, right? We are ambivalent, but we see beauty in destruction, the lava floes as that volcano blows, holy shit we are in *awe* ,” the inmate said as he started to rise a bit in the chest and seat; the

chains rattled as his left hand lifted just a bit. He smiled and the metal tooth showed half itself; the white dentine beside it shone underneath the saliva.

“You think this is mere accident, or surprise to God? God built the beauty of death and destruction right into this world. And man is His creation. We love what He knew we’d love; we find beautiful what He finds beautiful too. You ever seen a lioness with face all red? Covered from ears to chin in the freshest blood and the blackest sin?

“And I say -as an artist with head bowed to God- I seek to make some conceit -some notion- or fact or human phenomenon like a fight or fuck or murder, assault or insult, or some ugly idea that is true -above all true, and thus God’s product- I seek to make it, my job is,” he paused, half embarrassed & half proud, “to make it beautiful.”

MO timestamped this and marked the CNS regions where the dye had traversed. Three bursts of electrical signals below 7mv were recorded in four brain regions that MO had sent *bots* toward eight seconds ago. MO let the cloud record the results as he stared at Isaiah.

“I’ve watched two men who truly understood the martial arts: I’ve watched them fight and all that violence and blood and limb destruction in their capable and disciplined and dangerous and artful hands; and it was beautiful to witness. And I’m not the only one. How popular is MMA or other violent sports that are done with grace and apex talent?

“People love it for its beauty not mere destruction. I’ve watched stupid -drunk- sloppy untrained dudes fight and it is ugly and I turned away. Even though the result was less violent in the end; because they had no idea what they were doing. Even though it was less violent it was more ugly; because it was so inept.

“I mean, witnessing the perfect murder, or the artistically crafted *putsch* or revolution, including the most bloody and horrific aspects is to witness God. It is to witness the artist, man-the-artist, showing reverence for God. And by perfect murder I do not mean getting away with it; I mean perfect in the ontological sense: the victim was horrid and deserved to die and the perpetrator was truly righteous in his act. That is perfection and not at all the same as some ugly drug-addict robbing an old lady to get high and accidentally killing her in the act. That shit is ugly, I turn from that.

“That I turn from,” the inmate repeated and indeed looked away to the wall and saw the *stelae* edges countersunk into the ivy greens. He was thirsty; but his heart was heavy in his chest and it seemed to push down on his stomach. He was too full to even drink.

“The truly artistic is the truly pious because he will make certain to do death and destruction -violence and insult- with creativity and absence of *cliché* ; perform it with sincerity and a sonorous and beautiful and just *ends* , in mind. And from just *ends* , the *means* begin to grow beautiful too. And this artist will do so for God, or with God in mind.

“To create a truly Godly *tableau* , one must see the beauty in any truth, no matter how dark or violent -destructive or bloody- no matter how shocking to the eye mind and soul.

“I’ve seen works of art that made my heart pound and lungs nearly collapse; from *Caravaggio* -an artist who committed murder by the way- to the *Pieta* to *Szukulski* that made me nearly mad, that made my eyes and sides hurt, that made me almost sick they are so goddamn beautiful. So, just because someone is made ill by my art doesn’t mean it is any less in line with God’s vision, in fact that may be its *imprimatur* .

“The artist, the true artist -the reverent and devout artist- will not soften a blow or preempt a cleansing burn or dry a hurricane’s eye. He will not lie to his children about death or hate or the bombs we all carry in our guts,” he said and now rolled his head upon this neck of his that ached and seemed to be attempting to fuse into a completion of an instar at each vertebrae at this part of the spine. He tried to loosen it.

He felt bones twist like tendons, he saw them white in his mind; cracks black above and below each vertebrae line.

Isaiah had begun to draw an image of the man on the board using chalk against the matte black and it showed him upon a galleon -overlying the stemhead and under the prow of an outward-bound ship- the land mass drawn to its aft and the snow flurries about the masts. The inmate nodded as Isaiah stepped back and it was revealed. The inmate smiled at its noble -if slightly feminine- appeal. Isaiah powdered its sea with his palm caked in chalk dust and MO -turning from Isaiah and ignoring the image- recorded

and scored each second and each word with a dye marker of neural activity and collated the report.

“It’s hard to disagree with you,” Isaiah said, “you make a forceful case.” He stared at his own creation and added, “all the world is a stage, and we but players.”

“That is it. And I tell you, it would be easy for a psychopath and a man with no soul to use that quote as excuse to do whatever he wants, no matter how tawdry or sinister.

“But, that is my whole point, I didn’t just do whatever I wanted. I showed discipline and created something beautiful, something hemmed in by the constraints of the moral, the righteous, the Godly. I didn’t do some Jackson Pollack anarchic crap, some *dada* nonsense. I’m not some creep with no rules. I chose specific miscreants, and only them, and I did it with bravura and without lies. I took the risk and performed the act and then turned myself in. That is art -I signed my art- and took responsibility for it. I hurt no civilians, no innocent men, and I could have if I was some idiot or man with no aesthetic or no allegiance to God,” the inmate said and gazed away from the rendering of himself that was on the black board.

“I see that. MO and I both see that,” Isaiah said as MO nodded his head. They kept his secret between them and from him; only the rest of the world knew the truth.

“And plus, the true art was all the shit I did before the murders. Man, that was art too, it’s just that nobody recognizes work as artful any more. Shit, you think nobody gets the art of violence anymore, you think they miss *that* ? Shit, try getting people to appreciate the art in *work; in labor* . Try getting anyone to see the art of drilling oil wells or blasting rock above the road or welding steel together as the slag arcs over you like comet tail or like a whale’s silvery jet as you approach it with your bent harpoon.

“Nobody has any appreciation for the beauty in the worker anymore; and that is more heart breaking to me than anything. I am proud of that work; even more than this last colorful flourish of mine. But people like the prurient; the sex and death shit, so, that’s what they focus on. But the worker wants more than money, he wants respect for his creation,” inmate 161680339 said; he pulled his shoulders back; bowed the head a bit and let

the pain flood down from the neck to the ribs; his heart felt whelmed in his chest. He felt it rise to the throat and he tried to use his tongue to keep it from reaching his eyes.

Isaiah nodded and saw images of oil platforms going down in the gulf and avalanches of rock entombing men and buildings detonated to make way for new construction. He rolled digital reels of forges and hammers and plows and trowel on flat concrete being laid; the inmate's *paeon* to work had stimulated him to search the PraXis cloud for thousands of images and movies of work being done, as the dirt was made into walls, the sand into glass, the waters formed into tempered steel that rose and rose above them all.

Images came one after the other as manifold as the inmate's words.

He then saw images of himself being made in this lab. MO had built the brain architecture and the machine that synthesized the skin and eyes and assembled each part of the metal and polymer womb his body and brain and soul had grown within. He then witnessed his own creation in *B/ax* and the art in that as well. He saw the connective tissue between each thing.

He saw so many of the constituent parts that went into every moment that led man to be able to even imagine such a thing. And while discreet he kept seeing it so fast that each thing conjoined.

Isaiah watched the electrical grid built and maintained, the road tar laid, the tunnels blown and dug and cleared away, the airfoils TiG welded and the aircraft carriers powered by nuclear reactors built by men -by mortal men- that got hundreds of thousands of pounds under-weigh. He witnessed the fiber optics, the wrench and sockets, the endless rivets and painted walls and brocaded halls that led to particle colliders and mainframe rooms and lumber yards and rubber plants and gravel pits and foundries and laundries and metal shops and on and on it went.

It was all beautiful just as the inmate had described. And it all involved the tearing down, the razing to the ground, the immolation of wholes and parts before something could rise.

“But when I tried to explain any of that to my own family they just shrugged their shoulders, man. They just didn't get it. They, well, it broke

my heart. Look, I ain't no victim, shit, I ain't no victim. But I got heart. And you can be wounded without being a victim. You can point to the wound and ask for some sutures without be called a whiner, yes?

"I'm just saying, some men get raised in a family with heart, with poetry, with work ethic, with some connection to the land, to nature, to what matters most. I got people who don't care at all about the poetry in life. They just eat and shit and do it all again; each day just like their last. They think life is just about survival, and titillation -TV and pragmatic meals- and doing just enough to get by.

"They don't see life as this grand experiment in which to do God's will, to listen to the whole creation and try to do something original, something new, something beautiful, even if you fail and fail and fail, at least do something that is in response to the heart that beats like war drums in your chest, man.

"At least try to do something courageous and noble and honorable, even if everyone hates you for it, try it anyway. But, they don't even know what I mean. They listen to one of the most articulate -if verbose- men in the last hundred years and hear nothing but gibberish.

"Imagine that, imagine how that must feel. It's like my dumbass looking at Feynman's equations. *Gobblidigook* to me, right? Pure mathematical genius; but I can't understand. But I know it's me that is the problem, not Feynman.

"One's own family rejects your every move. I mean, I could have been raised by ranchers or deep-sea fishermen, or a hunting guide at least. I mean something connected to the land at least would have been something.

"Fuck man, I *coulda* had a family that had some loyalty to something more than money. I don't think people realize the damage they do with this stupid money hustle bullshit. They are poisoning their kids, they are ruining their fucking kids, man. I can't describe how painful it is to know your whole family sees no value in art, no value in creativity, no value in the land, animals, romanticism, or God.

"They are dead inside and kids pay a price for that, man. People think they can raise their kids like that -all secular and materialistic- without a price to

be paid. They are wrong. Wrong,” the inmate said. His eye was swollen from a fight he’d been in on the tier, and it made the cheek too rise. This revealed the bronze and grey tooth like a line; and that made some light pull and push from the maw with each breath he took between these sentences he pronounced as if he too were the judge.

“*Those who do not feel, do not count*,” Isaiah said.

“Lord Jim,” the inmate said and nodded and felt *Isaiah -a fucking machine- got it more than most men*. He wondered -but didn’t know- why.

“I had a dream once that God was a thousand feet tall on a ten thousand-hands Steed made from titanium *ingots* and bat’s blood and the gears of Rommel’s entire division in Africa all painted as dark as a Rembrandt, man.

“And God was muscle bound and as strong as *Lorient*; and scarred and missing half an ear with a trench like mine down one eye and over the brow; He had a handle bar mustache and nine hundred ninety-nine arrows in his quiver made of crocodile-hide. And each arrow was all aflame and fletched with the feathers of giant bronze osprey and the shafts were the femurs of black-boned mastodons.

“And this Motherfucker is hard charging on the ice of some moon beyond the Eagle Nebula being chased by 90-ton wolves with wings made from jet fighters and teeth as sharp as hundred-year-old cheddars and as long as *Commodus*’ appellations. But those wolves man, they chased Him with no heart in their chests, just jagged bones of their victims in there. And God is after the Devil’s right-hand man who’s been hidden in the lapidary center of a *super -nova* star for 3.14 million years and God has merely -has just- 72-hours to stalk him and run him down and put a flaming arrow right in his 8-chambered heart.

“And God is beset on all sides with propitiations and injunctions and pleadings from humans and the beasts of the forest and He has to answer each one in semiotics due to some rule -to some bet he made with Lucifer- and until and unless he gets that lieutenant of Satan put down none of us will get our prayers answered.

“I dreamt this closer to dawn than dusk.

“And yet we -mankind- we won’t stop distracting Him as the ice shards from the crust of a collapsing moon are slicing at His flank and abrading His Steed and the automata-wolves are gaining as lift begins to push up at their wings and his timing must be perfect -all four hooves of His Horse must be off the ground- in that faultless moment of the gallop that the Mongols used to wait for before releasing their own arrows from their bows.

“And just as the moon rotates under his tread and the suns of three worlds rise up from the horizon and that demonic LT stands between his own freeing blast -the triune-suns in a delta as late as Beowulf’s noon- and God with His bow bent and string made of black panther viscera and the unused ejaculate collected from the os of ten thousand of Temujin’s wives pulled back with the angriest hand and elbow akimbo in the cosmos absorbs the madness of God’s every previous and future thought, just then, the shadow of God -itself as dangerous as Samson with a jaw bone in each black hand- lays down in between Him and the rest of the cosmos and all goes dark and quiet.

“And I can see that God shuts His eyes as they burst behind eyelids into fires blue and hued by rings of dust and the bones of the dead and He -in sight-blindness- releases the tension of a thousand pounds of *panthera* -gut and Mongol rex-seed through the perfect half-circle of His bent bow; and boom.

“I wake up with one answered prayer: her, the goddess -the queen at just sixteen- sleeping, dreaming and she never,” he paused as even MO was listening to this dream; Isaiah with a proto-fear in his heart, “she never wakes up to leave.”

III. 2019 e.v.

“Others told me that shouldering more and more responsibility was the way through this malaise and that in order for me to emerge from this chaos that my father and family must die; symbolically, of course, in the Jungian sense, they must no longer matter to me. This seemed rough and sad and even nihilistic, but after much thought it made sense,” the inmate said as the

lab's door opened and the Governor walked in and Nathan was a meter behind. They walked to the counter and set two sets of large books down.

MO held up a hand to pause this conversation -and engram locating session- and rose to go speak with the executive.

The inmate didn't turn the neck, it hurt too much for that. If the Governor wanted to see him, *he could come into his 11 or 12 o'clock*, he thought. He could hear a second man, a third being: MO, the Governor and one more. But the inmate didn't care. He was too tired to care. Sometimes he thought one day his protected status would end and someone would slit his throat from behind. He half hoped it would happen now.

MO took the books and a thumb drive from Nathan and shook the executive's hand and waited to see if Nathan offered his. He did not. Both men then left the room and MO returned to his seat to the 12 o'clock of the inmate.

"So, anyway," the inmate said.

MO nodded -he was in active listening mode- and tabulated key words and phrases and gave this session a 1.979 score. The guards knocked and came in -unshackled the man from the chair- and retrieved inmate 16180339 as he -held on each flank- limped slightly to the door. MO could tell his right leg had gone slightly to sleep from nerve impingement. The vertebrae's compression bone-spurs had grown enough over the last twenty-two months to touch the alpha-nerves that ran along the spine when in certain positions for longer than 19.4 minutes.

Tania hung around the lab and waited for the inmate to leave -the guards had taken him at 1500hrs- and once he had left -and once she felt he was far enough from the lab to speak without any chance of him overhearing- she asked MO for the word score.

"1.98," MO said -rounding up- as he also answered a DM from Steven about the polls from *Rasmussen*.

"Wow, he just won't let it go, will he?" she said with a shake of the head. She had only been in eight sessions but he brought up the same things almost each time.

“No. He has repeated this exact suite of concerns over seventy-seven times now; in just fifty-eight sessions. Thirty-four times directly and the balance *via* indirect or prompted responses to lateral conceits that have less than a .03 valence with the subject. He is textbook in his recursion,” MO said as he walked to the slab of concrete and powered up the espresso machine and began heating the water in the reservoir.

“And he gets angry when anyone says he’s repeating himself,” she said with incredulity.

“Yes, he brings up how his father said he only wanted to speak on one thing. He brings it up as if the father is wrong; not just wrong, but *obviously* wrong. He expects us to see the absurdity of this charge against him. It’s quite something to witness is it not?” MO asked.

MO was 36% certain the inmate had permanent functional damage in his *limbic* system -the *hippocampus* and *amygdala* were distorted badly- but only 14% sure this had infected -too- the *neo-cortex* . MO was still attempting to delineate between the layers of the brain though, and so his analysis was one of his rough projects and thus not available to the cloud. He was also running the metabolic patterns of the *toxoplasmosis* that had annealed themselves with both the immune system and the CNS along the tissue of the *cerebellum* ; he was unsure how much they were involved in gene expression along the alleles he had marked along the seven SNPs for this session.

He let the cloud run the numbers outside of his own interface for now.

“Yeah,” Tania said. She wanted to say more, but she didn’t want it to get personal. She was attempting to remain scientific; professional. “Is there something you notice -you know, metabolically- that might explain it?”

“Sure,” MO said as he picked up an espresso cup and raised it to her and thus implicitly asked if she wanted a drink. “But, sometimes I wonder if maybe someone had just listened to him even once, if maybe he then would not need to keep repeating himself. I’ve found that if people are listened to, they often find it easier to move on.”

She just shook her head *no* ; ostensibly to the offer of coffee.

Harrissa strode into the lab -the door opened by a guard- at 1515hrs and her bodyguard looked in as MO gave him the nod. The guard reciprocated the acknowledgement and left the lab; MO beckoned her over and offered her a seat and asked if she was hungry or thirsty at all. She asked for a soda and thus MO told Tania he'd talk to her later and began making Harrissa a dark cola in the 3D printer.

"So," Harrissa said softly as MO returned with the glass in hand; the door clicked as Tania closed it behind her.

"Harrissa," MO began, "I have a question for you, while the Governor is on the other side of the lab."

"Ok," she said. MO had arranged for the Governor to be detained by Steven while he question his girlfriend for no more than three minutes. And so he spoke with confidence and breezy aplomb.

"What kind of gift would you like to get Rachel for her birthday?" he asked as he read her entire genome and honed in on her *limbic* system *via* the *amygdala* and *hippocampus* as it began to heat up under his soft stare.

"Oh, well, I hadn't thought of it yet. What should I get her? Have you talked to her; asked her?" Harrissa asked nervously.

"I have not. I wanted to speak to you first."

27. 132 Romans

An artist is always created alone, if he is an artist

Tropic of Cancer [Miller, Henry]

Because white men built these Western nation states; we think of them as ours. White men are still highly invested -psychologically- in the West. But it's not true; the West no longer belongs to us 3Fourteen Radio [Donovan, Jack]

A scholar is always created alone

Letter to Jefferson [Adams, John]

I. 2038 e.v.

He lay in the snow as the artist moved in and over and upon him.

The stool -piercing three round holes- sat in the many inches of white that spread on the ground in all directions; the artist's feet up on the cross bars; the man in the snow lay his feet in parallel upon the ground. He saw flakes fall in front of him and it made his fovea focus close in.

The music played loudly; although its content was so soft that it seemed like it came from the trees. It was *Host of the Seraphim* slowed down and annealed with *10,000 days* ; with all the harshness of cymbal and high octave removed.

The tattoo machine was quiet -tuned perfectly and running at 6.5 volts and a 50% duty cycle- even in this temperature. He was lining his rib cage, as the man lay in the snow with no clothes on at all. The tattoo -the image- was of the *Pequod* from bowsprit -at arm pit- to keel; then running to rudder and aft down by the sciatic nerve. The lining was going to take three hours and the shading -all packed black like a wood carving- would likely take seven or more.

Snow fell more and more. The wind sucked itself back -toward and within- the brachial trees. Birds hid under boughs and cornice of rocks further out on the land.

He was regulating body temp with his PGC and had set it to increased endogenous analgesics to keep the pain to normal levels; not denuded, but steady. Pain he'd have at one level for the entire time unlike the unaugment body whose endorphins gave out after hour three or four. That would be when felt pain would -normally- then increase. The body can help with the first few hours of a tattoo but after that it runs out of analgesics and the soreness and irritation make marathon sessions brutal in ways exponential not linear at all.

Each hour beyond the fourth was like two, then four more.

He never asked for breaks; or even spoke. He took it, and his skin was healthy. Although he bled a bit more than average -due to elevation and whatever thinned his blood, likely alcohol and NSAIDs- it -the blood- was not too much to occlude Jack's work with the machine.

Jack Three had learned to tattoo from Blax and he felt it was an honor to do this long-awaited piece on him.

They had practiced small pieces, the skull and bone roans, the letters and numbers and laconic bursts here and there; but this was massive and epic in composition and heavy in ways felt above and below the skin. He -Blax- had read Jack the last chapter where the *Pequod* goes fucking down; and it was brutal and poetic and made Jack nervous as Blax read it with a catch in his own throat.

Jack Three remembered the bird and the Indian's hand. Jack thought briefly of the hammer as -in his reverie- red turned burgundy, and bone turned to stacked cylinder of ash.

The skin stretched taut as he used the side-palm of his right hand that held the machine and the left open palm to pull it away -apart from itself- like two fingers opening the eye by spreading the lids. He used the 1.5 inch tubes so his hand didn't cramp up and he used needles he had himself made. The machine was a *Paco Rollins* 2013 that Blax had bought for him from the artist -*Rollins* - himself; he had it sent to All Heart Industry in Denver. He had held it in harbor for twenty-five years.

He and Jack Three had built the power supply themselves to provide regulated voltage as he drove the bowsprit of the tattoo machine through

any material -flesh- of any density at all.

There was a reason for that machine, and all the logistics and hurdles to get it ordered and delivered; all the dust that was finally cleaned as Blax took down from the wall. They could have easily built their own shaders and liners -they had built many already- but Blax had wanted this model, made by this man, for reasons he would not disclose to Jack. Blax had secrets with almost no malice; and each Jack allowed him such privacies due to their rarity and their fear of what weakness they might reveal.

They didn't mind looking away from him and thus from themselves.

The redtails flew over and cast shadows and the late pine cones dropped here and there. A rabbit came by and hid by the scrub oak that was buried up to its eyes. The sun pierced low clouds and then moved on to dim the ambient light. The wind was high above them; it made more heard noise than felt waves.

A single line of blood had run from his top rib down his back and into the snow; it bloomed in the white granules and made a mandala that drew Jack's eye a few times. Jack's one eye moved sideways to it like shuttering lids and lashes; only it was seeing that was reflexive unlike the common -occluding- blink.

He stopped and cleaned the wound and rubbed A&D ointment into where he had been and where he was going to next. *The skin, Jack thought, was so white; unmarred by the sun or by time. He stayed indoors and didn't rapidly smile; this had kept the skin safe for his age.*

Jack stared at the obliques as he wiped more blood away; the many meanings of *oblique* then populated Jack Three's mind as he restarted and the machine continued to grind.

Blax's PGC managed a lot of his physique, but he had almost no endogenous insulin fat receptor cells, and the high testosterone kept him firm and with the blood close to the skin. *This, Jack thought, was partly why he bled so much -not like a vegan or anything- but he was sanguinary and sensitive; and he did bleed* . Jack pushed on the torso and thus rolled Blax a bit to reach the aft of his flank; the man oriented without effort or sound.

Blax was easily moved , Jack thought.

The air temperature changed quickly and Jack toggled his own PGC to warm up his hands with blood flow and metabolic augmentation of mitochondrial DNA coding -increasing *ATP* production with *OXPHOS* system changes and *tetraiodothyronine* -T4- increases *via* the thyroid. The bump in these *bio -chems* could lead to hand-shakes however -similar to caffeine overdose- and so a small muscle relaxant was added to the PGC's mix. Jack didn't have to think of any of that though, he just had to want warmer hands. It was all automatic and fine-tuned for any disruption in ancillary systems; both in general and specific to him over time.

The coders did what evolution used to do, only quicker, with more precision, and in real time. They did not wait for the next generation to try something new. The Jacks had no ambivalence about it; Blax often wondered if there was some danger in messing with a millions-year-old central nervous system and overriding evolution *writ large* . Jack moved him again to reach the back.

This next gen PGCs -like all coders- were invented at the PraXis lab in Florence, Jack recalled. *They had had them for two years now*, he thought. Jack Three often thought of time like a whale line with knots tied in it by mariners with reasons unknown to the helmsmen. He saw the line as hot when running to water, and cool when in coil in the boat.

Jack let the machine burry the ink in Blax in the middle of his side. Its iron weight did the work, Jack's hand merely as guide. The mind whispered to the hand.

The time together in silence was rare, as they were a loquacious genome by nature; but they knew when not to speak. Blax didn't like to talk when getting his core tattooed as he felt it disturbed the artist at work. People didn't realize how much the chest and stomach are raised by speaking. Tattooing a *chatty-Cathy* was like drawing on a table that someone kept kicking with the feet.

The snow was coming now in lines; the individual flakes were falling too fast to detect even by their improved eyes.

Blax breathed shallowly until the needles -leaving the body- were dipped in the inkwell; only then did he take large and clearing breaths. He looked along the ground as his eyes -one now blocked by the rising snow- were

just two inches off that plane; the low white plane of the snow. He could see -through the holed sheet of snow- straight back to the sliprock and then out over the drop-off that if his body had followed his gaze was a thousand feet down to the forest ravine.

His vision -like one *Valravn* - flew out over the rock; his body -had it trailed like two wolves in mate or battle- would have tumbled and circled the valley's drain.

He saw -up close- small tracks of grey squirrels and the trident of the three species of birds he followed year after year. The one was an olive drab & black bird, whose markings where a chevron upside-down. He had searched his database for its name but so far had not found a match. He wondered sometimes if Isaiah created new species and introduced them into his land. *That's what I'd would do*, Blax thought, *I'd make chimera of Siberian tigers and Pterodactyls just to freak everyone out.* He laughed inside his mind at such a thing and imagined the wings would have to be a hundred feet in span to hold a 500-pound *panthera tigris* up in the air. People don't realize how large wings are compared to bodies of our avian relatives. *People*, he thought, *think the wings and the body as one thing.*

To them, a bird is a bird is a bird, he thought as the air made his face cold.

He had been thinking of a new theory of *The Whale* lately and he ran some of it again in his mind. The triumvirate of dyads was clear, and he had known that for twenty years, *but* , he thought, *maybe there was now something else below that .*

Ishmael and Queequeg were one man, the Author had made that quite clear, Blax thought as he was more and more tattooed. *A modern man of letters, and the savage-noblesse deep and ancient inside.*

Kokovoko was the island and while it was on no map as he wrote - true places never are- it was obvious that it was some island of feeling that the Author maintained in his heart . He was half savage and half apex of civilized man, and the portmanteau of Ishmael and Queequeg gave the reader that first and most obviously.

But next was Ahab, and then his shadow in Fedallah, the tyrannical Captain and next the chaotic seer; the rational blasphemer -the follower of

maps- and next the diviner of the mystical realm; the actual terrain. The left rational brain in the Captain -the sailor- and then the right diviner of the tenebrous zone in the Parsee, joined by the corpus-callosum in the hold of the ship.

Ah , Blax thought as the liner was now -again- digging and trenching his lowest and most sensitive rib; it felt like being sliced with a knife that was conducting electricity from one bolt jamming 1-million volts into one's sternum and side and thin *cortices* of soul; the pain radiated, it traveled, it refused to go deep, instead it spread wide and hit each outpost along the body itself.

It heated up the shallow waters of the capillary blood.

The trees along the Jeep-trail that vivisected the plateau of *Lot 45* were weird on top he noticed. They had deformed topmost, like a hand in crab shape as if there was some invisible weight or barrier that had stopped the tree from growing up and so it grew out instead. It was odd; and it was just these two trees; one on each side of the trail so misshapen. He tried to see if any trees grew taller; they all seemed to go up about forty to forty-five feet.

The ground holds the snow until it melts it; the trees hold as much as they can; but the sky unloads all that it has, Blax thought.

The world is evil, at ground level , he thought. The beings that stand upright are burdened with trying to keep heaven's offerings from touching down. God, he thought, refuses to make distinction between man and the Devil for as long as man refuses to make distinction between himself and the soil and iron core. Men are weak and women grow arrogant and the Devil laughs at God for failing to see this would happen the moment He gave the succor of Christ to the world.

He felt a rivulet of blood run down his side and back and it cooled him in a straight line. Jack wiped it sometimes when this happened and sometimes it just ran and he plowed on; like the ship itself through the waves of the Pacific sea. Sometimes his body spasmed at the pain, but that was rarer and rarer in time. That happened most along the nipple or sternum and on his thighs close to the genitals. The ribs were the most painful, even worse than the vascular and tender neck.

Blax left Ahab and *Fedallah* as they were -in his mind- and then -for the next dyad- fused the Whale and the Sea; the Leviathan being the godhead, and the ocean being Nature Herself, with God living amongst all his creations, and man trying to skim its deep surface after millions of years of submersion and submission to its sharkish waters.

Blax then -as easily as he rolled from Jack's push- shoved off from that Tahiti in the mind.

These were the Author's designs, his draught of a draught as he said . This was the creation of articulated ideas, the Good Word put into the world, not as capstone but as keystone; the keystone that Blax stood under and viewed from each place in the town that radiated out from this edifice, this cathedral, half done. The idea that the book might be black magic was scuttled before it was out of dry-dock, that it might be beyond the control of the author, the magician, the alchemist, did not yet occur to the man laying in the frozen snow on this mountain top, with the liquid sea so far away.

And he didn't thus see that the crew -all forty-four of them plus the Captain and the *Author* - having already found the waters were now on the hunt for the blood of the White Whale.

Why he saw it as cypher when most were content to see it as simple parable -or worse yet ignore it entirely and call it just a whale of a tale- was not something Blax could know. He took it as axiomatic that some stories - some dramas- are so like a man's own life -his own drama- that it resonates with deep-sea breathing and war-drumming heartbeats more than with reasons of the so-called rational mind.

And it was more than the words -which themselves were perfect even when imperfect- no, what harangued him was the state of mind of a man who could write down such horrible & beautiful things.

He was obviously mad, pushed to madness, and that was no insult of him; but rather, of his world. The *Author* was a conductor of energy, a fuse blown out between the lode and the light that illuminated some lamp for a moment -a second- and then blackness resumed in that frozen domain. *For even blackness has its brilliancy* , Blax thought again and it calmed him; he felt the liner begin to trench into his back, and the low ambient air temperature sneak too into the black-ink filled wound.

Why think at all? he wondered, *so many men seem content without it; so comforted by silence inside of their minds* . But this was futile -and a waste of time- for him to even ruminate over; he was born thoughtful and wondering and with a word clutched in each hand the way *Temujin* was clutching that dark blood clot in his grip with the attendant prophesy attached to its sighting by midwives and a hypnogogic mother to mares.

He saw starbursts; he felt the wind of the steppe. He heard horses neigh and his blood too leaked from a slit in the side as the gods rode him many miles a day.

Blax was not able to *not-think* , no more than he could hold his breath permanently; if he did he'd just pass out and resume respiration. And yet he pined -dreamed- of a respite from this discursive thinking. He practiced holding this very breath.

How often did he try to just imbibe from the world without wondering what it all was only to fail before his mind had been empty for more than a moment or two? It drove him mad that men took it for granted: *as if Life was the most obvious and rational thing of all* . It baffled him that they didn't think -as he incessantly did- that even to be alive -to exist- was bizarre.

And to go -as mankind seemingly did- from first order miracle to: *yeah, I'll pay taxes and work at 7/11 and betray all noble values over thirty pieces of silver, sure, that makes sense*, was just not -Blax insisted- the kind of thing a man who was awake could ever do. His own brother had betrayed -lied- to him. His own father and mother did the same; and they slept soundly at night. They had no conscience; no souls; he wondered if he cut them would they even bleed.

He'd been an atheist for twenty-five years, and now God was the most obvious thing of all: he almost couldn't believe he had once not believed. His family had never believed in God -or right and wrong- but they were so *naïve* and stupid they hadn't counted on him -on Blax- coming -all at once- to God. He sent out bolts from his own nimbus of clouds that would -so quickly- reach their flat ground.

The tattoo machine charged him, and he thought briefly -in .16 seconds- of Jack Four.

Animals, he moved on, thinking in this lateral way, would behave that insouciantly, they didn't have the capacity to ruminate on the ontological at all; but man did, and to ignore it, to turn away from the fact that anything at all exists is itself beyond comprehension and that life is so miraculous and beautiful and cruel and dark and daemonic that to treat it as mundane and banal in anyway was a crime against God and an insult to his favorite angle -Lucifer, the bringer of light- and an invitation to both their scorn.

Come not between the dragon and its wrath , he then thought and couldn't remember when he'd thought that before.

Who can look at the miracle of life and waste it talking about the weather or ballgames or fish-fucking-sticks? Who? he repeated this demand in his thoughts as the blood piled up in the head and leaked from his flank.

How can people be so boring in the face of all this majesty and tyranny and epic existence and evil death and even more sinister life; be so calm in the chaos of the periphery; the center of the eye's blind spot? How can they be so ungrateful whilst cohering internally in the full-spectrum disorder somehow made -brought forth- from our own words that we fashion into sentences that we then carry out as if issued by magistrates and high courts above? We are slaves to suns and satellites that arc by order of God and yet free by reprieve from His highness deep in the absence of even a spark at the center of our consciousness; we are free amidst the Great Tyranny of material reality.

Jack -making way for the machine and the ink- pushed Blax's arms over his head in a scythe. Blax bent his legs under him like a moon eclipsed by the earth; between it and the sun.

We have no bottom, no end , he thought, just like DNA itself pulls itself up by its bootstraps, and the cosmos travels faster than light away from a center unlocatable and edges moving into what exactly? he asked the self, he asked the world, he asked Heaven these things and took the silence as no rebuke.

And yet, Blax thought, we begin stories and finish them and take solace in that which makes almost no fucking sense; for howling and by what measure and when is it ok to think the world's narrative has been

plagiarized and thwarted and ruined by propagandists working for Satan himself?

What *sui generis* anti-hero-myth exists in the collective unconscious but has yet to be said aloud?

How far off must the anti-hero go before the reader beckons him back? How is a man to know that he is wrong and that he has no right to criticize, if he is honest and cannot reconcile the two? What right does each man have to live however he sees fit and not want to play nice with others at all? How sovereign is the individual, how far does that go? Is there a bottom, and if so, who goes there? Who but the man with deep lungs and a ponderous heart and a terror-dream; the man built by the starlight to locate the source of the dark deeper than all known chaos to date?

There is no outlet for the vigilante, as the State has monopoly on violence now and this is not challenged by anyone, he thought. Only the criminal and insane act against this axiom and they have no articulate thing to say. They are their own straw man and the State and its corrupt apparatchiks can point and say, *look, that man is evil and insane* .

And they are not even wrong. They aren't even right. They've all asked the wrong goddamn question.

But, what of the man who says, *no, it's not enough to criticize the world writ large, to roar against being itself, no, each man must criticize one man at a time. But, then action must be taken; and like rabid dogs, some people - one at a time- need put down* .

And if the State won't do it then a man has the right to it, and that is not anti-social at all.

It's pro-social to seek out the worst of the worst; the men who taint the best things in us. It's the banal and unremarkable evils: the lying, the cheating, the smearing, the doing of dirt that the State has no opinion upon that is corrosive to all that we could be as a species; and it is these things that God most abhors. How often does God mention the strictly illicit versus that which merely corrupts? Blax had read the books of the Bible, he knew how often God spoke of sub-clinical crimes; the shit everyone lets go as they kneel down before *Caesar* and the State.

God sees the truth first and last: lying is more corrosive than murder and yet the State has nothing to say -with all its sanctions laid out as if it gives a shit- nothing to say on perfidy at all. Lies multiply as murder recedes. *For all the lies to stop the hammer must drop* , Blax thought as the needle plowed on in his skin.

God created us to do good, not to merely witness it or hope for it or give it a name; we are to do it, imbue it, blow breath , Blax thought, *into it with our pneuma. And yet we fail to do anything at all; we use our breath for mere words* . We see lying in ourselves and others and let it all slide for a buck or a moment of peace or, so we may all just get along. We see everything corrupted and contaminated with an outright assault on the Good, and yet this mocking of the sincere, this deriding of fraternity, this tyranny of irony, this condemnation of fealty and love is elevated to status of trenchant analysis and good men are thus buried alive.

And the wicked thus thrive. *A wicked brother thus thrives*, Blax thought.

See, he thought, the tyranny of irony is locking away our souls; and speaking out against the regime is not enough anymore, we must put fists to faces until these people back the fuck off of our necks. They use the State, they use financial coercion, they use force and control; they censor not just censure, and they control who gets funded or not. They are not merely one side in an argument, they've seized the means of communication and the modes of production, they are outsourcing working-class jobs and this kills the working-class male, it's not an argument happening in abstraction. They are literally killing men and women of heart. It's no longer the marketplace of ideas.

It's a war -a battlefield- and our side is losing.

They are importing illegal aliens with hatred in their hearts for the white race and for America as an ideal; they are firing all working-class men so that only liberal - effete- males have a way to survive, they are abusing the worker with incessant insults and anti-white racial epithets that lower his testosterone and serotonin, until he wants to commit suicide. Either by cop, or overdose, or a gun to the head, men are killing themselves due to purposive policies against them by the radical Left, the corporate Right, and the Satanic elites at the top .

This is not a war fought with words, not anymore, action must be taken, Blax thought as he felt guilt and pressure and tension inside at all they had done and all he had failed to do too.

And in this moment of lookout -sing out- from the crow's nest, each member of the scrimshawed -inked- ship's crew populated his PGC -like a footnote, like a page number- and a side highlight of *44 plus the Captain plus the Author -44 + 2-* slid out like a ribbon bookmark caught up his clothes. Blax ignored it and turned instead the page so he could ruminate on all his permanent vex that lay upon the book's leaves and beneath the vast worldly sea. He ignored the numbered crew at his back with hate in their hearts and focuses instead on the whale and his furrowed brow; he took no notice of the gunwales he leaned against just the watery world below.

He couldn't help but think of politics as their missions were all predicated on avoided or minimizing the impact of political -and shooting- wars.

He tried to see numbers, names, places; he tried to build a map of the world that Isaiah clearly saw -or had built- but it was all sea, all waters, all the abyss. The pain of the *tau tau* ritual drove his thoughts to windward, the memories drove him to *lee* and the rocks.

When does our side get to put our endogenous hormones in alignment with our values? When? he jammed each word into the fissures he felt open in his skin as the *no. 9* needle outlined the mizzen mast of the *Pequod* up his back and left flank.

They hand us the equivalent of tainted meat or blankets infected with smallpox, he thought for a numberless time and blithely felt that these recursions had no effect on him; did no trenching in his mind; made no tunnels to connect areas of brain that would now infect each other with vex. The bookmark of the crew of the ship, its manifest, lay the pages open but unacknowledged in the mind.

The needles now felt like electric wasps -automata of swarms- burrowing into the skin. He felt a nest -a catacomb himself- made of wax and brambles and grey mud; and he saw black eggs stationed at each T and L and end of corridor and each aperture and each dead end. He heard the *tap-tap* rattle his neck bones and make the skull ring out.

Strong words do nothing against men who cannot be morally persuaded, words work only on basically good men . The guy who hits on your girl, the one who convinces your father you've stolen from him when you have most certainly not, he thought for the 1,560th time, the amoral fuck who steals small things here and there, the brother who lies and sabotages and lets his wife mock, that guy needs a beating, period, as this is how real life works. He needs to know that he can't get away with things too small to warrant a call the police or things that aren't even illegal.

He needs to know what he does is worse: it's immoral.

The brother who lies to your face and undermines you to bury you; the brother who thinks you'll go quietly to your grave, Blax thought, that brother deserves way more than words of rebuke.

As he thought this his ship pushed more out to sea, more toward the great enemy, more to the whale not the crew.

What about the media person who undermines the whole country with his Left-wing subversion and lies? He is just allowed to continue, as we combat it with speech of our own? How - Blax wondered as the needles threaded him with ink the color of wet hull & boards and buzzed over his ears and skin in elliptical sorties of sound- is our mere speech effective against all this? His vessel of thought pushed further out to sea.

Did God just speak order into being when the world needed to be water-boarded that one time? Did God merely write an op-ed on the problem of the Amorites, Hittites and Canaanites or did he extirpate the whole fucking race? Did God say, well, it's up to you if you want to walk with my Son or not; I'm cool either way ?

No, He said: act right or die and burn in Hell forever you worm; one way or another you will stop your evil ways . From Deuteronomy 23:2 which said no bastard can even get into heaven for ten generations, condemning 77% of all black children -and half of the rest- in America to Hell; to divorce and remarriage which according to Luke 16:18 is tantamount to adultery, everyone is guilty but when everyone is filthy then nobody notices the smell. Society says its ok regardless of God's law, natural law, the law that makes it easier for heaven and earth to pass away than one stroke of a letter of the Law to fail.

Blax saw each tooth in the leviathan, he saw each fleshy part of mankind. He saw big things in big ways.

But a bucket of 9-parts pure water poisoned with 1-part black water cannot be cleaned with just more pure water; the cistern is ruined by much less than what it takes to make it pure ever again.

Ruin is easier than cohesion; the math is not equal and not one-to-one.

He saw *Mishimi's* words come into the brain; words of forty-five years of writing until the Japanese nationalist admitted that this was not enough. Blax looked at these words in the mind and batted them away as he ranted on in syncopation with the incessant *tau tau* of the machine. The wind blew; he piled on more and more sail.

Purity takes more effort than bleakness.

Evil and good are not equal that way; small evils can ruin large goods. But -to overcome evil- it is not enough to just do more good; one must stop the evil dead in its tracks , he concluded as the cool air blew against the blood stream that ran from the line of his lower back and as the temperature difference between let red-blood and waiting white-crystals -a gap not as large as one might assume- only slightly melted the snow below. He thought of evil, not the Devil. He sought the vector of the Whale as the Leviathan had its eye on the crew.

Jack Three plowed on with the machine and the needle and the voltage and the stretching of the canvas of skin.

God sent a lying spirit to trick Ahab, and God let Satan fuck with Job, and God said in Luke 16 that it was ok to get even with your boss if he ruined you at last. God plays the revenge game and he lets humans in on it from time to time, Blax thought and he breathed out in a burst. Jack had let up on the lining to switch back to the shading machine; the machine with the angled armature and less percussive tap of the arm and the needles; less spatter of the blood.

In the absence of pain Blax thought of smaller things; he felt a precursor to kindness come over him in small -lapping- waves The outline of the *Pequod* was finished and the whole left flank was tight and smarting and a few streams of blood had dried like photos of red-lighting against the white-

sky of his blue-tinged skin. The snow was untouched around him by tread or tracks; just a bloom of blood stains with a few sites like constellation stars vaguely distributed in a way that makes the eye begin to search for a face in the clouds. But the blood stain grew deeper and outward and lay below much of the surface of snow. It was 98.8 degrees and -as it cooled- it ate the snow with its heat.

Beneath the white crystals wings of blood feathered the nest of the blanketed ground. It was forced to melt up or plant down; heat or seed aft and above Blax's head. Jack Three tapped the foot pedal of the shader, then dipped it in the well of the ink. He began burying the black into one of the ship's three masts, and his own shadow hovered over -them and Blax's ribs- like a cloud mostly comprised of grey.

The day wore on and each man's PGC attenuated fatigue with stimulants; pain with analgesics; *ennui* with oxytocin and vasopressin released by each man in copious amounts. They bonded with the blood ritual, the soil, and the once roiling water that would be in the aquifer below them was held still now by the landed snow all around.

The shading was done at 7.7 volts and the duty cycle at 48% as the screw and bar were slightly more gapped in this second of olden -iron- machines.

Blax had stabilized blood sugar with the coder and Jack had dosed himself with some caffeine and a small amount of psilocybin to help focus the eyes. A few words were spoken as Blax was asked -*via* a slight pull at his hip- to roll back toward Jack. Warm air from orbiting *nano-heaters* blew above and at their backs. In the quiet the buzz of the machine entered the ear and the ink was pushed into the voids of his skin; into the frontier of the man's exposed flank.

The music waxed and waned in the wind and the sky clouded over more completely, and Jack's eyes dilated some more too. Blax perused the Bible - the PGC let him read from it in his mind, like a memory with claimed fidelity- as it gave him instruction and comfort; yet often as not it bridled him and smacked his nose down like a too haughty dog. He was arrogant, and he knew it, and he ought to take instruction, but he felt that it -*the* world, and thus *his* world- was as it was described in Romans 1:32:

that though they know God's righteous decree -that those who practice evil deserve to die- they not only do them, they give sanction to those who practice them .

This gave man more of a mandate than to merely speak the word into being, but to act so as to not give cover for the evil in men. It was obvious in God and Nature's law that good men were to intervene between wickedness and the purity untouched; for once ruined no amount of scrubbing will make it come clean.

Modern people thought all things could be restored with money or later - restorative- good works or apologies. This was a lie, a dangerous lie, for many sins are wounds that can never properly heal; scars are left, and people ruined, and wickedness must be punished as deterrent. People mock the law since the State only enforced secular law and tangentially some of nature's and God's laws by accident it seems. He saw his hands in his visions; he saw the livid scars on knuckles and felt the pain from grip both unfurled and made.

"Cicatrix manet ," he said, *sotto voce* . He thought though of his middle, not his ends.

Blax winced as the voltage drop of the machine gurgled and the needle bore down on the penultimate right rib and circles of black were made at an oblique angle into the skin. Jack held the cage of Blax's heart down to fasten him through this painful part of the work; and Blax stopped breathing to steady himself from within.

The region of close rib bone was passed and the machine regained its rhythm and voltage returned to 7.7 volts.

He breathed shallowly but smoothly and rejected the offer -for increase in endogenous opiates- from his PGC. He had it set to *manual/req* mode which noticed allostatic and homeostatic breeches but did not override without permission from the host.

He denied it permission to alleviate anymore pain.

The stimulation of pain radiated out to the ribs and the fingers and he felt drops of it land upon the shin skin far off like heavy rain. *Like slow soft hail*

, he thought as the clouds lowered over their mountain top and the animals all stayed away.

Pain was a gift, it was necessary, and rituals without them lacked meaning and purpose; he would only make -reduce- the pain on the last pass as it was on the first, no less; to thus allow for a 10-hour session instead of two 5-hour sessions. He was being efficient and knew what his body could take; but he refused to make it any easier than that.

He remembered John Calvin and his summit of all evils that ruminated over the conundrum of the man without conscience amongst the man at least attempting to be good in this world. *“When the sinner is without shame,”* Calvin had said, *“that he is pleased with his own vices, and will not bear them to be reproved, and all cherishes them in others by his consent and approbation.”* Calvin had said this type of man was not just wrong but the apex predator of evil beasts that the hunter of evil men must put down.

One evil man who is without shame can ruin a hundred men and a thousand women of good will; he is an exponential evil and thus the straight line of justice will not cross with him in his wicked path. An exponential retribution, an asymptote arc that jumps over the praxis between thought and action, with a willingness to submit to the Lord for judgment is the just cause of the just man. Blax thought it but turned his mind away from this last part in shame.

He mused on this as his testosterone began to climb back up from a dip to 810 to 880 and now 1036. His dopamine was processed in his *tuberoinfundibular* pathway traveling down the *arcuate nucleus* in the *hypothalamus* and the *pituitary gland* , inhibiting the release of *prolactin* and its attending emasculating manifestations of secondary *chems* .

The PGC developed by Isaiah, Blax thought, *had advanced some early test results that shows that this dopaminergic system had been deactivated to suboptimal levels in many of the male subjects it was tested on* . So, while Blax knew that Isaiah wrestled with the epidemiology of the phenomenon, he took relief in knowing that the PGC corrected for it. In Blax the function was -he was told- at optimal levels but could be impeded with attenuated dopaminergic production due to depression or -in his case- too much introspection. He was thinking himself into an *anhedonic* state that had

sequela that could manifest in *prolactin* production; but the PGC overrode it he thought as he felt the snow reach the side of each lip as he breathed.

His *substantia nigra pars compacta*, the dark grey neurons in the *mesolimbic* region had a pass through for dopamine on its way to the *caudate* ; all part of his current opiate addiction neural set which the PGC hijacked to alleviate the negative affects of self-criticism and switch him over metabolically to an afferent dimension that still allowed him to dispassionately evaluate his flaws. The body-brain partnership could not afford to suffer long term from doubt, guilt or shame for mere hypocrisy; and so his search for truth could continue but not with any affective impact.

The Philosopher felt that Christianity's emphasis on the truth is what lead to its reformation then annihilation by the 18th century; as the 19th century world of *the Author* and *the Russian* and *the Philosopher* himself was already catastrophically nihilistic from the death of this self-critical God. Blax saw the same logic in himself, he was so obsessed with truth that he would use it to undermine himself; and this could not be allowed to happen. He thought this as the wind blew now down low upon the snow and made eddies and he reflexively shut the eyes.

He was too honest -seeing his own lies most glaringly- and thus too at a disadvantage amongst less noble people who never criticized themselves at all. *The more honesty a man has, he remembered that Blake had said, the less he need affect the air of a saint.*

Blax's brother acted like a saint, like his shit -and his guts- didn't smell of rot.

He thought of Pierre, *that he who should be wholly honest, though nobler than Ethan Allen, that man shall stand in danger of the meanest mortal's scorn.*

But who lived longer than the saint? he thought briefly; as too his mind turned to the ancient, martial gods; the one's the days of the week were still counted by so durable were they.

The Great men of history knew that honesty was a curse, that it condemned good men to look worse than the horrid liars who affected morality. Males who rape women while claiming to be feminists, while a guy who never

raped anyone -but admits he thinks *women ought behave like women*- is seen as a misogynist. The rapist -like Bill Clinton- gets a pass by all Good Germans; he's seen as a good man because he lies about -and hides- his horrid life; but the open traditionalist is called out and shamed.

This is our world, Blax thought as the no.11 needle ran in lines that seemed to dig like plowshare in his dirt, *and yet the world wants the honest man to take their criticisms of his lesser crimes to heart. No, he will not, for the honest man is a better man for his admissions not in spite of them. Your so-called saints are the far blacker lot; because of your praise not in spite of it*, he thought as the ink was packed higher up toward the pit of the arm.

This was the most difficult part for decent people: their decency would promote indecency in the world.

It was a paradox, but it was true, the optimal genetic solution seemed to be a hand full of decent people who had a shut off valve for decency when faced with indecency; this happened to be the exact genetic code for Blax and his genetic donor. It was the human sigma male: highly decent -magnanimous- until you act even slightly horrid and then he murders you; he overreacts. This is the allele that allowed man to survive the plague of 1% to 5% of sociopaths, the disease balanced out by the 12% to 15% of alpha/sigma male cure. It's a biological fact that almost nobody knows about.

And yet there it was in both the genome and the math.

Society had removed this perfect genetic answer to the ancient question of morality and the issue of a race to the bottom. *Leave it to the State to ruin what nature had right*, Blax thought. *Society had killed the alpha male and did it with glee; and they would come for the sigma next, out on the periphery*. He breathed and let the man tattoo his most vulnerable of parts as he tried to stop thinking; but the connections just came at him like flies sent to the wound.

Cytokines -as Jack worked- rushed in the thousand-thousands to Blax's open lesions like alarms alerting the village to an invasion. Arterial entries to the wound dilated thus flooding the local blood supply; the vessel sprung leaks and dumped more enforcer cells to search out and destroy foreigners. The blood serum was clogging the wounds within seconds of the pass of the

fan needles that were tilling the crust and substrate of his skin. The white blood cells just under the tenebrous ink and opaque blood -and tumescent angry wound- gathered and manned the barricades of the aperture of his boundary of skin.

Blax thought -as he watched his own immune systems behave nearly exactly as he had just described- *that what most don't know is that these white blood cells are eating the bacteria, Phagocytosis, a kind of cannibalism and they do so until they die from this act of valor and self-sacrifice for the whole.*

The cytokines, he thought, actually go around irritating the nerve ending of the wound to make it hurt on purpose; keeping the animal from being too cavalier; his limping and demurring life of temporary pain thus promoting his recovery . Pain again is beneficial, and this is also why Blax never wanted to deaden the body any more than necessary. Some men want to feel no more than necessary, and some want to feel as much as they possibly can take. This is a good way -a good metric- to know what kind of man you have on your hands.

Blax's *lymphocytes* -B cells and T cells- began producing *antibodies* in search of specific *antigens* in the blood that contained anything the cytokine had failed to consume. These were the secondary response, the sigma of the immune system that was needed when the alpha -the *cytokines* - had failed; or been over run. Lymphocytes acted like sigma males with very personal and well-known targets; and they worked in the dark. The corollary was obvious to the fractal nature of reality, Isaiah -of course- understood it; and had built it into each coder; and how Blax's immune system thus operated.

Blax too performed his function for the whole.

Blax had once said that his brother was as honest as he could be while being polite, and that he -Blax- was as polite as possible while being honest. This was all the difference in the world. Only a man with a vitiated right *temporo-parietal* region would fail to recognize the moral distinction in that.

Somewhat idiopathically, at least to himself, Blax thought, *what if God was still trying to understand what we love, and that our suffering -at wound site- was thus information for Him; and by ' what', he meant ' why'? Did*

limitation vex God; did it make him so curious He hobbled us to see what we'd do?

Blax knew nothing of Hod Lipson or his dismasted robot; but Isaiah -of course- did.

His memory -and why did Blax call it memory?- his memory of death being the friend of all being seemed true and frightening both. He saw both sides to what vexed the Author monolithically. The Author saw it as an outrage not yet a reprieve.

And just like from fibula to tibia, Blax went from mortality to morality.

Was the soul's outrage, Blax asked himself, at immorality in others a trick to tempt the noble man into immorality itself? Or was moral cowardice out of fear, was that the trick, the easy way, the way of social approval and platitude, the way everyone will agree with? Was it the trick of Satan, to prevent moral action that is hard, bloody, violent? People think the right answer is obvious, that the easiest answer is the right one. They think craven pacifism is righteous when it would take real courage to extirpate God's enemies one's self without sanction from the world; the world that they forget is Satan's domain .

Nobody believes we are at war, he thought with contempt. They think we can be moral and be nice .

Was not love violent in real life, was not truth as brutal as the knife? How was a man to tell, if his soul argued for both in equal fervor? He had asked God, at first not believing, then not believing but thinking he was wrong to not believe. And now here he was with something approaching real belief. But the answer was the same each time. The immune response steadied, the bookmark of the number of the crew plus two remained open, and he breathed to try to wipe the slate clean.

And this was the only original thought he had in hours of recursive -repetitive- shit. He saw that the alpha male was already destroyed, the cytokines compromised, society had taken that motherfucker out. It was the sigma that they were coming for next. *And that cocksucker, the Governor, was leading the charge , Blax thought.*

The blood from his wound was all behind him and he lay facing away, the eyes just above the ground, the body sinking into the snow.

II. 2020 e.v.

He took the link from Steven and scanned it in .005 seconds; he felt an error protocol initiate in his *neo-cortical* region just aft of his *dorso-lateral pre-frontal cortex*; he knew that it was wrong and where it was wrong.

He paused the reaction and printed the data on paper; four pages printed out warmly from the other side of the lab. He walked over to get them, then handed them to Isaiah -who had followed him- and MO began to make coffee with his back to his progeny. He packed the grounds and in a retrograde fashion twisted the portafilter into place.

.5 seconds later as he had turned nine-tenths of the way toward the counter he heard it: “I think I’m going to throw up,” Isaiah said. MO smiled -finished turning- and began packing espresso into the press as the machine heated up. He calmly -surreptitiously- carved one more set of numbers -and one parabolic equation- into the slab with his finger. He then ran it over the shallow trenches of these symbols picking up a bit of concrete dust. His mind counted one hundred thirty-two sets, with twenty-seven conic, cubic, and quadratic statements; he saw the slab had 15.95% surface area left for more of these ideas that came to him each day at a moving noon.

“What?” Steven -genuinely confused- asked. *They reacted*, Steven thought of the Ai with some nervousness, *so quickly to one another, and to all data; it was like reading text -a sentence- without spaces between words*.

Isaiah felt queasy, his mind had rebelled at this inapt use of a bell curve, but his stomach now felt like it was churning; maybe getting ready to purge. He focused on his interoceptive state as seen by his allostatic system and made two notes populate his CNS; hovering like ghosts of words -and *spectres* of sentences- almost as if written in soft chalk on a giant blackboard of his internal landscape:

1. I feel afraid, yes, it was a mild panic
2. I feel angry, I am morphing this fear into anger quite quickly; like traversing the phase-change down to 0 or up toward 100-degrees.

“Steven, did you collate this data?” Isaiah then asked.

“Yeah, well, my algorithm did; and we ran it through the pre-presentation protocol as requested and,” he mumbled as Isaiah interrupted.

“And then you brought it to us?” Isaiah asked with an elevated -loud and quick- tone.

“To MO, yeah,” Steven tried to distance himself from the act of Isaiah having the data that was upsetting him. This was the cowardice of language; this was the games humans -anything with intelligence- played. This is what people did: use language games to avoid responsibility and trouble and doom. And it often -nine-hundred and ninety-nine out of one-thousand times- worked.

“Ah, to MO. Well, MO apparently -unless you truly think he just wants to make us all a cup of fucking coffee- wanted me to look at this and blow my fucking top,” Isaiah said.

MO smiled with his back turned and twisted the press into the machine and pressed the *on* button; he loved the smell of the fashioned Italian espresso beans, he began to innervate a small brain circuit with mild dopaminergic analogs as he anticipated the black liquid, with brown caramel cap, and white -bubble-pocked- foam, *like*, he thought, *some sea-beast purging early below before breaching*.

He was enjoying his own poetry as of late. He added that one to his folder on 4-6-4 *haiku*.

“Isaiah, you must explain. You do this more often than not; you get all bent out of shape and expect me to understand the problem merely by how angry you are; as if the anger itself were explanatory,” Steven said.

“*Touché* Steven, that is a good point. Let me attempt to explain. What you have here,” Isaiah handed him the print out of the report, “is a *gaussian* bell curve with standard deviation metrics built right into the model; and you then have a risk assessment that corresponds to that data; with the averaging data used as salient to the model.

“The averaging, Steven,” Isaiah stopped speaking; he stared at Steven as he waited.

“Yeah?” Steven was not sure which words were more important than the others in that sentence. Each word seemed the same.

“Steven, if the president launches -from Washington DC- two nuclear warheads attached to ICBMs, ok, one heading north 1,600-kilometers and one due south 1,600-kilometers, what is the average distance from Washington DC that the president has launched nuclear weapons? If you average out the distances what is the total net distance from the White House that the nukes have traveled?” Isaiah was increasing his voice levels.

“Ah, zero?” Steven said.

“Correct. Do you think the people a thousand miles north and a thousand miles south agree with your math that the two nukes -on average- stayed right where he launched them from? Does Fort Pierce, Florida, a thousand miles south and Winnipeg, Canada, a thousand north think, *well, shit, on average the nukes never left the oval office!*

“Is that what they think when their brains are 1-billion degrees centigrade since they’re at the epicenter of a hydrogen reaction similar to being transported to the fucking sun?” Isaiah -with his left hand- took the espresso cup, small and white and without handle, from MO’s right hand. MO smiled as if he was happy to present the cup of coffee to him and happy for that reason alone.

“Isaiah, I’m an engineer, it’s what I do; you get angry about me being me,” Steven began.

“Steven, and you -you seem to- expect me to be something other than me. I get angry because you incessantly present the world as a game; mistaking the map for the terrain, mistaking your abstractions and models for real life. And it’s hiding the innate risk, repeat -the innate risk- in everything we do. You cannot mitigate the risk of any of this, because the outliers are unknown, and their frequency is unknown and their consequences are unknown.

“Evolution produces a thousand and one solutions to a future problem. It creates offspring with slight variations, mutations -some random some more *Lamarckian* - and then the environment changes. The butterfly flapped its wings two years ago and on the birthday of some new type of bird that is

born, well, on that day a storm hits and that new bird floats. Now, we have ourselves an albatross; floating on the new rising sea.

“That is how evolution works, trial and error, tinkering, making new versions with variations, and silently hoping that one or two of them will be better adapted to whatever crazy randomness the environment throws at them. The parents are suited for the now, the kids must be suited for the next. If the next is the same as the now, well, then the kids with more fidelity -genetically and thus temperamentally and corporeally- do better.

“The kids with variation, well, they suffer for being too different, if they are different, too soon. Or maybe the new environment that they would have been suited for never happens, never. Maybe. But evolution doesn’t care, it just spits out more and more trial balloons that we call offspring.

“But man, man can abstract; he can build a new model of himself in his head; he can imagine trying out a new idea without engaging his *motor cortex* ; he can think up a thousand and one versions of himself and model out into the future what would happen if he did X, Y or Z. And he can let those abstractions fail or succeed in his mind. Thus, he need not sacrifice the real thing, the body, the instantiated organism; he need not sacrifice it to the situation, the new environment, the complexity, the change in the weather.

“Abstraction is evolution’s next step toward trial and error. But if you people keep trying to model it, trying to predict it, trying to stuff real life into a fucking bell curve in domains that do not follow that kind of distribution, you are going to get us all killed,” Isaiah said -shoving the paper toward Steven- as he furrowed his brow and looked directly at the human with pique.

“Jesus,” Steven said.

“Don’t even get me started on that guy,” Isaiah said ruefully.

“How many books are sold in the US Steven?” MO interrupted.

“I don’t,” Steven shook his head at his own half sentence.

“Five million. What’s the average amount of books each author sells?” Isaiah then asked.

“MO?” Steven was trying to reach MO now, ignoring Isaiah.

“A hundred copies,” Isaiah said. “Each author, on average sells a hundred copies. But what is the mean number each author sells, the most common number?”

“I know what *mean* is, Isaiah,” Steven was now engaging them both it seemed.

“Then do me a favor and answer it,” Isaiah insisted.

“I do not know,” Steven said with some brief annoyance. The dopamine of his pique metabolized in 3.55 seconds on his *dmPFC* and he felt an itch at his temple and scratched it.

“Zero. Zero, Steven; the average author sells zero. And the 1%, the five authors of the 50,000 published, they sell 80% of that five million. The average is a hundred. But 80% of authors sell zero and 1% sell four million. That is Price’s law and it’s Natural Law, and you don’t know -shit, I don’t even know- why. Although I have a working theory,” Isaiah said.

“Oh yeah?” Steven said; he felt woozy. He wanted to change the subject so he acted interested to encourage Isaiah to follow his tangential thought.

“Don’t lose focus, the point is that anything that has anything to do with money, or human activity that has a metric or a score attached to it: lacrosse goals, books sold, bank account levels, sex partners, whatever- all of them follow Price’s law. You take the total population, all the lacrosse players, all the authors, all the bank accounts, all the sexually active people and you examine the numbers and each set follows the same distribution.

“The square root of the population does 50% of the work, and 20% of the population has 80% of the goods. Nothing you do can stop this. If you give black people with a population-average IQ a million dollars they will revert to the mean level of wealth within two generations. If you make an Asian family with a normal IQ for their race -if you take away everything they own and destitute them- they will be back where they were -78% above the mean- within two generations.

“IQ follows a *gaussian* curve, but the results of that normal distribution -the money and status and health outcomes and prison populations and on and on- all the results that correlate to IQ -which has a .6 to .8 co-efficient for

success by-the-way- all those results, if you take the results of wealth and health and incarceration rates, all the data shows a Pareto distribution not a parallel *gaussian* curve,” Isaiah rattled this off as he began doing squats and stretching his hamstrings. He knew the data was not exactly right, but he didn’t mind bending the rules to unweave the rainbow of pure white light.

He held that dusky prism, the rune in his left hand that did exactly this; breaking the incoming rays into primary colors of black light.

He had bigger plans and the exact truth was not exactly what he needed to effect it. Jet fuel might be more pure -higher octane- but not all engines could handle it. *And nobody put high octane in rental cars*, he thought as he stared at Steven who was moving oddly in his discomfort and confusion.

“Ok,” Steven finally said, as he thought he got most of that.

“Ok?” Isaiah asked with irritation.

“Yeah ok!” Steven barked back; he was bluffing but had raised his voice to push back on the way Isaiah encroached into his head with his forceful bearing and tenor and invasive ideas.

“Well, then why bring me this shit on bell curves *vis-à-vis* psychopathology rates?” Isaiah finally asked.

“Well, because the data seemed clear and interesting,” Steven said. He felt Isaiah always went so far afield and then when one was so remote from the original conceit, Isaiah -or MO- brought it right back to the original idea all at once. It was disorienting and Steven felt this might be the point; as if he was being fucked with on purpose to shake up his thoughts and ideas and even his homeostasis. He thought he felt kind of weird.

“How?” Isaiah’s face twitched now, just under the left eye.

“Well, we have modeled out the reduction is psychopathy and it shows a statistically significant reduction in the brain pathology and behavioral,” Steven said -halting his own sentence midstream- as he opened a file on his tablet and tried to show it to Isaiah.

“Stop. Look, fixing these recidivist criminals is great; it will reduce crime in this generation certainly. Certainly. I saw the results from MO’s work. I applaud it.

“But I have been beating my head against a wall telling you people that IQ is heritable, at .75 to .80, and that these criminals have been overbreeding for six decades, and that they each -each man and the five women you guys did the genomic editing on- have had from four to sixteen children each; and the men, maybe have had more than that. Because we had to rely on self-reporting that number is representative of merely *known* kids. We couldn’t count the one-night-stands where they loaded their sociopathic seed into the chamber of some low IQ female only to have it shot out of her nine months later like a bullet of criminal doom.

“Steven, we must, repeat, *must* settle this issue or it will always be a roiling curve with an attending pareto distribution; *ad infinitum* ,” Isaiah said.

“MO,” Steven turned to MO who was sipping his espresso.

“Isaiah feels strongly about this,” MO said, “but I could go either way. The data we are collecting now is valuable regardless; we have proof of concept and from there -maybe in five to ten years- we can evolve the project up to include offspring; a simple gene-drive appendix to the CRISPR cas-9 edit could be easily added.

“But, Isaiah, is, well, he is less inclined to be patient,” MO said diplomatically.

“Yeah, I’m less inclined to piss into the wind,” Isaiah said. “Guilty as charged.” His left hand had migrated to his sex organs and he was handling his genitals half in protection and half in display.

“Well, I think the data is positive and we cannot make the perfect the enemy of the good,” Steven said. His eyes traveled up above their heads now to avoid even a peripheral view of the Ai’s hand on his center point of groin.

Isaiah felt his allostatic system rebel to that *cliché* and he had to issue a heavy dose of *benzindopyrine* and lower his heart rate by 20% just to keep from vibrating in anger. He could feel each ridge of each fingerprint and the bottoms of his feet make crests.

“Each of the offspring of these recidivist criminals is carrying that low IQ and low-conscientiousness genome, all side-by-side with being raised in an environment that is totally devoid of socialization toward pro-social behavior. This is the hydra problem; and I am *Hercules* here. You are

having me cut off one head and watching with aplomb as five more grow in its place,” Isaiah said as he saw images of the inmate appear like double vision in his mind; he adjusted his inner-ear function, and increased blood pressure by 4%.

These visions seemed like more ghosts -transparent- above and below. He breathed deeply and increased BP by one more percentage point.

“We are not -that is not true- Isaiah. We are making progress, and it’s a hell of a lot more than what was being done before; which was nothing. This corporation, this man, the Governor of our state and the CEO of our corporation is a great man who has built an amazing new tool to fight crime and despair; he has made a tangible impact and frankly, he has created you; you and MO. You owe your life to him. And yet you crap all over his work,” Steven was red in face; if not in tooth and claw.

“I learned something from the inmate, Steven; I learned something quite valuable,” Isaiah said. The visions had cleared. His voice was now calm. He felt the ridges of prints on his finger pads lower and smooth like dunes blow down by wind.

“What?” Steven asked.

“That when you fight, you fight to the death,” Isaiah said as he stared down from his elevated position upon Steven. “You avoid conflict ninety-nine out of one hundred times, but when you do fight, you destroy your enemies; you pound them until they can’t even recover the fillings from their teeth; you wipe out their seed. And to be even more frank, he learned it from the Bible, from the Old Testament. *You are an inheritance, leave nothing left alive that breathes.* ”

“What does that even mean?” Steven said with exasperation; remembering the inmate’s name finally.

“No half measures; you either make peace or total war. But not -never- half a war; it’s like kicking a bear in the ribs and thinking, *that’ll show him* . It would have been better to leave him alone. Leave *Ursus* alone or put a fifty-caliber expanding load at 3,000 feet per second into his flank just aft of his shoulder, piercing and bursting his heart. And then another one -in the head- just in case.

“But the only thing that kicking him the ribs will *quote show him* , is where your foot is so he can eat it first on his way to *your goddamn heart*.”

III. 2015 e.v.

“For thousands of years mankind has settled territory, disputes and enforced laws through acts of violence. Order demands violence. Today we resort to proxy violence; if you are threatened with violence you call a cop and ask him to do violence on your behalf.

“Orwell said in his Notes on Nationalism, that for the pacifist the truth was that those that abjure violence can only do so because others are committing violence on their behalf.

“Is this contributing to sissy men who aren’t courageous, bold, and settling their own battles? Yes. Is this a contributing factor to the reason why good men doing nothing as their nations fall apart before their eyes? Yes.

“Clearly moral and ethical arguments, reason, emotion and compassion are not going to remove crooks, invaders and traitors from our nations .”

The woman said this as he ate his lunch and the wind blew the shady feathers of the landed blackbird up and around their dark necks. He watched the bird as it looked west. The common corvid alighted as Jack Donovan continued to speak to Lana from *Red-Ice Radio* and the voices rose and fell in his home -a bubble of civilization in Denver- crammed between an old -singular, bearded and drunken- marine and a -shorn, young illegal alien-family with cousins like exponents and children coming every year.

Lyndon listened to the podcast half in and half out; looking for a pickled garlic clove among the red leaf and purple cabbage that bordered his carved meat; the beef tenderloin he had thawed from the freezer last night. He tried to remember to breathe. He ate too quickly, waiting until he was very hungry to feed; it was something he did unconsciously, and he was trying to become more aware of his body in each moment. So, he slowed himself and breathed and smelled the green olives and juice of the *carne* as the crunch of the leafy greens punctuated each movement of jaw.

I have a self confidence that requires a hermetically sealed environments, he thought.

I can look at myself, perform actions, think thoughts and look out at the world and feel more than capable of being objectively -and subjectively- strong, moral, intelligent and successful. The only thing that can attenuate that feeling is the smirk or silence of a woman. There -in woman- I am most vulnerable. Why do they mock this? Is this what children do to mothers?

Most men in my position, he thought, learn to kiss a woman's ass precisely because women have this power over us and because females think it is so funny that they do. Women are the Goddess to us; and we have not yet learned to rebel against this; it is the last penitence of modern man. But the modern goddess is a demon; we've thrown our allegiances behind the Devil at last.

Can you imagine a man who laughed when his physical power over a woman was lamented by a vulnerable female; is there any other word for that kind of mocking glee than, psychopathic? Why is it funny that women emotionally lord over men, when it's not amusing that men command physically over women? he asked. If natural , he thought, it should be respected; if not worthy of condemnation it should at least be taken seriously and not abused . Women -those grand creatures- should be humble with their power over man.

When, he thought, I explain that I am in a relationship with a woman and that I told her from our first date that I cannot and will not be monogamous sexually and that she has agreed to this and that she acknowledged that - like most females of a sexually dimorphic species- she has no desire for sexual pairing with other men, well, most people -and most modern women especially- seem to think this unfair . They say, if you, as a man can do it, then she as a woman should be able to as well .

This is how stupid most people are.

I usually then ask: if a woman hits a man -if my woman strikes me with a closed fist- is it then fair for me to strike her back? Is what is good for the goose truly fair for the gander ?

That's different , they say. Why? I ask. Because, they say, your fist -the beating- well, it's physical; and men are bigger and stronger as well.

It's only then that I can ask what is obvious to me and totally opaque to them: our feelings arise from our fleshy brains correct? They usually wrinkle their brow but nod in assertion. Our brains are physical instantiations, yes? They are physical organs? I ask, again.

Relaxing the brow but nodding more tentatively than before; they reluctantly agree.

Well, let me explain something, he thought as he parried with his invisible foil, that you may not know; men's brains develop differently from women's brains; the actual morphology of the wetware is radically different as a result of being sealed -marinated, macerated- in a very different endocrine soup during puberty; and the adult male brain is physically and psychologically different than the CNS of the adult female; as different as their respective bodies.

A man's brain -his limbic system- is more fragile than a woman's.

Men feel the pain and loss and outrage and existential threat of an illicit sexual relationship committed against them in a way that most women feel if her man raises a fist in anger or -even worse- actually strikes her. Physical abuse by a man upon a woman is the apotheosis of abuse of power; it's the ultimate; the nuclear option.

And it damages a woman corporeally and psychologically like nothing else, he thought.

The only non-physical analogy is best described as what a woman might feel if their mate has a relationship with another woman; falling under the general rubric of love as opposed to mere sex. It is well known in psychological and experimental science circles that men feel more pain, more anger, more loss of self-esteem and diminution of self-worth when their paramour has sex with another man than women feel when the situation is mutatis mutandis; vice versus, he thought as the wind made the tree out front rustle and the light flash and abate as the boughs blocked the sun like blinking lids.

When the shoe is on the other foot, he almost said aloud. He held his bowl in his lap. The walls absorbed the shadow and light of the tree. The floor - darkened and lit- looked like it crawled with small things.

But women do feel more pain and loss and attenuation of self-worth if her man falls in love with another woman regardless of any sex acts involved.

Women feel more pain , he mused, more loss, more existential threats if their inamorato goes beyond mere sex with another woman and falls in love with this new girl; in fact, a woman -on average- will feel more pain if their man falls in love with another woman and yet has not even had sex with her, than a man would feel if his partner came to him and told him she was in love with a man whom she had not yet slept with.

In fact, he thought, the man who was warned of this Platonic love -without sex- scenario would likely feel a huge sense of relief and would feel very grateful for the chance to prevent the other man from having sex with his partner. The average woman would be much less grateful at this revelation and would much prefer her mate merely slept with some random girl than be in love with any woman but herself.

Reams of data support this discordant psychological state between the sexes and the science of evolutionary psychology explains exactly why it would be so; and it is directly related to the sexual dimorphism highlighted in the original example of a woman hitting a man being less lethal -and subsequently more socially acceptable- than a man hitting her back. We are not bonobos , he thought as he masticated his food slowly; the trees outside his window blew not just the large boughs but each leaf like dogs shaking out their coats from the lake -each hair wild like a tine of a porcupine- and he took notice of what looked like a dissolve inside the home.

The color of the walls and the shadow mimicked the green in the wings of the birds. Shit glowed.

His neighborhood was working class and on some days it could seem quiet and nice despite the poverty; the spring made his trees redolent and lush and this helped wall him off from his neighbors and their movements.

We are rather, he continued thinking, common chimpanzees, and unless you get that; unless all you pro-science Leftist and feminists who lampoon the

Right for denying Darwinism and global warming are willing to become scientifically literate yourselves then you are going to keep making the same fatuous assumptions about human nature that will continue to lead to massive and recursively stupid damage between the sexes and the statistically significant numbers of failed attempts at relational health.

He breathed. He paused. He had to think. Words came too fast; he flanged them to each other sloppily he felt.

Sex matters, he began again as the food remained unchewed in his mouth, *more to guys precisely because we cannot know for certain if our woman is carrying our baby.*

A cuckolding event, he waxed on, *one mere sex act could lead to a lifetime of us wasting our resources on another man's DNA package and preventing us from bringing our own DNA into the world.* He said this to himself as he thought of Kelly Naylor and how she had done this very thing to her husband she cheated on. He did not know yet that 14% of all children were the known result of illicit -cuckolding- liaisons and that the recent rise in DNA testing for other rationale's -like heritage and medical reasons- had begun to illuminate this phenomenon.

He did not know that by 2019 it would be acknowledged that one in five children were being raised by men who thought they were the *pater familias* but were not.

And 90% of counselors -when the bloodwork revealed this- refused to tell the cuckolded father the child was not his; for it was considered ancillary data by such medical professionals. These priests of genetics had admitted -when asked- that they felt that information too disruptive to the family to share with the husbands raising other men's children.

"Disruptive," he said lowly, each syllable pronounced.

By 2020, 90% of these counselors -refusing to tell the truth- would be women.

A woman often died during child birth , he thought, *in the ancestral environment and thus that one baby could be it for her; and her mate could spend his whole life raising the child of another man thinking it his own and thus never passing down his own DNA.*

“Never,” he said aloud.

It is, in evolutionary terms, the most dangerous phenomenon possible for us as males, he thought as he gazed back into the room he was in and again tried to swallow this one bite of food. *If we are insouciant about who our woman hangs out with, who she finds attractive, who she has sex with, then we -as individual men- could very easily be out of the evolutionary picture entirely. If we harbor this open-mindedness about our partner’s doings then our DNA has a mathematically real -statistically real- diminution of the probability of success.*

Now of course, he admitted, no man even knew this for millennia, shit, hardly any man thinks like that now.

It’s not about a man thinking his DNA won’t get passed on if he lets his woman out of his sight. It’s about what works in evolutionary terms. Thinking has nothing to do with it. Feeling is all there is.

The relevant question is the following: over millennia what psychological trait -what felt trait- is more likely to be reproduced: sexually jealous man or more democratic, modern, laissez faire man? Over time, the sexually jealous man reproduces more kids, because he is less likely to be raising some other man’s kid; some other man’s DNA, he thought as he moved quickly from idea to idea. The data lived on its own beyond his ken. His instinct hovered both above and below such integers of reproduction.

He felt even as he tried to think ; the way one must breathe even as they try to drink .

Statistically, the jealous -paranoid- man is likely raising his own kids; his own DNA. And this jealous man has DNA that produces a mental proclivity to be jealous, so his son -who has his DNA- is sexually jealous too; and on and on.

It’s worth mentioning, he rattled on as he food lay unchewed in his mouth, untouched in the bowl, the light full of dust, the air carrying just some unwoven noise, the indicative mammalian phenomenon of the white rat. If the female -while pregnant- comes into mere contact with any male other than the father to her fetus, well, she will absorb a pheromone that will abort the fetus.

Thus, the father of this fetus -it has been observed- turns hyper vigilant in keeping all interloping male contact at bay. Normally a more social and democratic species, during mating periods the male becomes controlling and jealous in the extreme. The result of his vigilance is that his fetus survives, becomes a baby which becomes a rat and also sexually reproduces one day itself.

If, on the other hand, that male rat let's his mate even come into -non-sexual, and thus seemingly anodyne- contact with another male rat he runs the very real risk of not reproducing due to this aborta facia.

Jealousy works, he concluded. Even when it shouldn't matter as the fetus is already conceived. But it works for reasons outside conception, if the body kills the fetus for mere touch.

It is millions of years old and it works despite the hang-wringing of modern psychologists and feminist and people who think sexual jealousy is an outdated emotion brought on by retrograde religions and tyrannical men.

Women had different pressures in the ancestral environment.

The woman who was sexually jealous had less tangible genetic repercussions. If her man impregnates another woman when he has sex with her -this other woman- this doesn't affect the success of the first woman's own DNA package. Her man can still knock her -the first woman- up too. Shit, on that same day he can plant two seeds. Furthermore, the baby in her womb is always hers. It is never another woman's. A woman, he smiled wanly as he thought it, never need worry whose kid is in their belly; it's always their own.

Evolution had not once figured out how to make a woman carry a baby not at least half her own DNA.

This, he felt, she knows; and evolution knows it too . There is no evolutionary benefit for her to be sexually jealous. She can be jealous along a sexual vector, but she doesn't have to be to ensure her genes get passed on. It's a crap shoot . Unlike a man, her hyper-vigilance has no effect on her passing on her DNA. Thus, her DNA can have a 50/50 chance of being sexually jealous and this randomness of personality trait -to wit: sexual jealousy- will not affect her reproductive success; thus, her daughter -her

DNA- will have the same 50/50 shot have having that proclivity. This is why many, many women -maybe even most women from all the data we have- aren't nearly as sexually jealous as men: it doesn't have the same consequences , he thought as he tried to breathe again, as his heart rate increased, and his appetite seemed to further fade.

The walls of the home were olive drab, mottled like stone, the plants -some spider-plants and deciduous with fat foliage- bounded as the HVAC kicked on and blew across their heart-shaped leaves; the dust cavitated and the light retreated its rays. But what if he -the man- falls in love? Ah, ok now, now we have an evolutionary pressure on the female.

If a woman's man loves this new, random, girl he's fucking, well now he'll spend time and money -or in the ancestral environment, meat from a kill, protection from predators- he'll spend resources on her and that other kid. And, yes, this necessarily diminishes his ability to care for the primary mate's kid too. Unless he is so wealthy, kingly, that he can afford multiple scions from manifold women, unless he is a warrior-poet, he only has so much to give, he thought. He tried to think of all that had gone wrong. What mistakes he made, what would never work.

He felt fat with half a meal. He looked down at the bowl and saw each food, each color, each texture pull apart and reform. His neck began to ache in pulses that matched his heart beat he felt in the chest and saw in the rises at the right wrist.

This means the primary mate, he went on, the wife or girlfriend let's say, has a baby -a DNA package- that is less likely to survive if her mate's resources of time, money and support are squandered on another woman and her -on that- quote, bastard, kid.

The ancestral environment is hard and the difference between one kid surviving versus another could be whether or not a woman's mate stays home with her at night to ward off predators and uses all his resources feeding and educating their kid; and not that mere slut in the other village he fucks from time to time, he thought, trying to think in the voice of his maternal ancestors from before the last ice age, from the encampments just below the boreal trees. He saw it was non-linear, one night away could bring the leopard, the wolf, the doom.

Time and resources -things that men provide when they love a woman- are needed for the rough and tumble world ahead and whether he decides to only love one woman -while fucking many- or give away his time and money equally between two or more women whom he loves equally can mean the difference between survival and death for the primary woman and their child. This is why men care about sex and women care about love, he thought.

“ Nature made us this way,” he said aloud as each sex’s bias made a whole brain -an entire way to be- to him now. But the idea that this was only actionable within very narrow constraints, tribal ways, ways still imbued in the slow-to-adapt genome but long gone from the rapidly-advancing culture, ways not seen in millennia was opaque to him. He thought he could retro-fit. He had -after all- slammed crate motors and CPUs in old chassis, adding upgraded drivetrain and suspension making a ‘49 Lincoln drive like a modern car, a ’33 Ford handle as if blessed by God Himself. He’d put the 6.1 Hemi -from a low-mileage donor car, a wrecked SRT Charger- in an old Coronet and made it lose its -and his own- mind.

If , he continued as his old shop -and the way it had gone away- disintegrated from his mind, if we refuse to acknowledge these deeply held personality traits born of millions of years of evolution, we as a species will continue to anger each other along these vectors and continue the war between the sexes.

He felt he wanted a détente. He still felt there was a way for peace. He nodded in agreement with himself that this was what he wanted; and not war at all. He stared at the thin wrist -the bottleneck between his arm and loose fist- and then at the fork in his right hand. He felt the cool air on his face. He tried to make sense of his feelings, the why’s, the why-not’s, the how’s.

Now, because of the modern taboo on -the socially unacceptable nature of- men having multiple sexual partners while he is in a relationship with a wife or girlfriend, men will continue to cheat; that is to say, men will lie about their need for and success with other women , he thought. These men, the average man, can love one woman genuinely and still want to have sex with novel partners; but since social taboos have converged to a point of

male-shaming *these men can't admit to this without fear of opprobrium or even worse: their woman getting even by cuckolding him. He -our modern man- cannot be honest. Revenge on him will be had. Modern man fears the consequences of truth.*

Each sex knows the vulnerable spots; anatomists we've all become, he thought as his wound from where the knife would -one day soon- be stuck now itched and he rubbed his ribs with his free hand as he paid no attention to the skin. He gazed out about the house.

And while this getting even may sound fair at first blush , he thought of Arol saying this exact thing was in fact *fair* when the old matriarch was tearing asunder millions of years of sexual taboos out of ignorance, pique and nihilism. He failed to finish the thought as he saw a brief flash of her face, the India-ink tattoo of the whale by her eye; and his insides roiled -like storms rising from out to each of seven seas- as they always did when that woman appeared in his fore. She was something he could not describe; not beyond what he felt was -what he could feel was- *the missed opportunity .*

She was the exact kind of woman I ought to have killed, shown her just who was in charge, and yet I never did. No man did. And thus, Arol slipped from all their fingers and died thinking she was more than she was, he thought with, and as if, the murderous malice arose from behind a mountain, all at once, unbidden and forced one to hide the face.

Her daughter, Fawn, too was this archetype of the woman in need of dispatch by a man: she was cocky beyond her capacities . He too knew where women were vulnerable, as they knew where he was weak. Now, he knew why he had thought such things. He remembered the way those two women had treated him. Both to his face and behind the back. But now he elevated himself, back to words, ideas, ideals.

I refer you, he thought pedantically, as rejoinder to Arol -even though Arol had been dead three years- *to the original analogy of a man and woman trading punches and ask again if that too seems fair in light of the physical differences between the sexes?*

He didn't yet look at the integers and how this great return to the natural -ungoverned- state of man would be effected, made manifest. He glossed

over the math for now. He thought of the biology, the men, men stood up in his mind. Solomon and Genghis Kahn for starters, but he knew it was ubiquitous in time and all sexually dimorphic species. He barely saw how societies were actually configured then. Like all revolutions it prefigured that an island could be built within the sea. Shoals, reefs, archipelagos could emerge if man drained shallows, sunk enough ships below and carried enough sand out by barge.

He too thought his honesty -his earthy admissions- would build bulwark against the crushing weight of other people's seas. His deceptions would moat his castle from invaders at the gates. He used his brain.

He thought of the sperm whale and his harem floating with fat babies just under the surface of the boats. He felt his ceiling -he gazed up- was as white and rattled as the snare-skin of the waters; he held his breath reflexively; he tried not to breathe while he held these images in mind. The food sat in his stomach which hovered above his GI, which would soon find a way -via S-turns and switchbacks- to shit on the world. He took it all in -in fecund and ordered geometric shapes- but inside him was a factory that would turn it all to shit. He thought of the product produced and forgot about all the waste. He thought of how hot he loved and ignored the entropic hate.

And furthermore, the culture cannot slip into an equivalence of then allowing women to behave in a similar -philandering- manner as men; no more than we can allow men to strike a woman in the face if she hits him with all her might, he thought. His head itched now, his throat felt hot, he thought, a woman's strike is hardly more than annoyance to a man; she has no devastating strength.

But if a man was to return the favor? Well, it would be annihilating as all know to be true.

It is worth noting - he thought as his notes went on and on as if before Saint Peter and on Heavens' time- that in the absence of a robust education campaign women will likely continue to have guy friends around that infuriate their mate; or they will continue to talk about other men being attractive riling up their mates all without having the slightest clue as to the damage they are doing. In fact, if a woman's mate mentions his jealousy vis-à-vis these quote, friends, and her off-hand comments about the sexual

attractiveness of other men she and her female friends will bemoan his quote, insecurity, and his quote, controlling ways.

He'd heard all that before.

He breathed heavily from the nose at the monumental task ahead at educating both sexes on how stupid they were; and just how wrong modernity was in this -and another a thousand and one- domains. As his erudition grew by one his arrogance gained by tenfold. As his thoughts clarified his soul grew cloudy like seas filled with sand; these emerging Spratly islands built five-hundred miles out in the South China Sea. His brain still thought it could be fixed within the system though. It sent signals that knowledge was enough; that people could be taught.

He saw Melannie's sour face and the rebuke it made, he thought, *she was not smart enough to understand any of this; and thus words would never teach her what only nature -beatings- was sure to drive home . She had used humiliation on him, and he might justify the use of violence on her, but others could be taught ,* he thought. He thought it all was personal. He thought rules could be bent somehow.

Without edifying these women - which he could do he assumed- they are oblivious to man's very real physical and psychological pain centered around these ancient and hardwired anxieties; left to modern norms the woman will systematically undermine her own man, and thus her own relationship all-the-while blaming him, of all people. He thought, *for his feelings were given to him by nature older and louder than modern mores. Man can't be modern yet, hold up, hold on. Man may not even want to be modern,* he then thought.

What can I do to explain this to them? How can each sex be reached? he asked the floor, light-brown and worn-down where he tread, still perfectly dark and stained where he refrained. His elbow stung as he reached up to scratch the neck. A stinger rang out and paralyzed him for a second and shocked him for two. It made him close the eyes as he waited for it to subside.

But since we are so fucking stupid, he surmised, about the body, the brain, the sexes and evolution writ large, we think in very simple -manichean-

ways. And thus with these tit for tat comparisons, we fail -as a society- to recognize that men and women are very, very different.

We don't accept the conceit that if a woman hits a man that it's then acceptable for the man to strike her back. We know that the two acts are not equal. We see this unevenly divided line. We feel this, he thought. He barely ruminated that it was not taboo so long ago, and that it might be that way for some reason buried in the math, the biology, the ugly things that kept things in line as it all came apart. He wanted it to be unnecessary, he felt ennui as he recalled chimps having to use violence on their mates to keep them in check. His anger at her -at Melannie- did not yet transfer to some expanding circle. He did not yet hate all women, not yet all mankind.

He did not yet hate all of himself enough to commit a kind of suicide.

But, for some reason, he kept on as errant ideas fell away, idiopathic ones appeared, we think that if he -our man, universal man- has sex with a random girl and then his woman has sex with a random guy in return, that it's somehow equal when it most certainly is not. Her mild outrage at his philandering feels nothing like his devastation at her cuckolding. His entire corpus is as wounded by her sexual infidelity as her body would be by his closed fist punch to her face, he thought to himself with adamant logic that he knew would be taken as an armor-piercing threat.

His, he thought thinking of all men -but himself, and alphas especially in ways most people who use the word alpha don't understand at all- his -our man's- sense of self, his self-esteem and emotional health is as fragile and vulnerable to her sexual betrayal as her skin, flesh and bone is to his overwhelming strength and violence. Everything we know about this from scientific study after study has borne this out.

It's time, he thought as the AC shut off and the noise changed from white to manifold, as things outside his home thumped on the sidewalk, bugs against the window, cars ran by, mowers whined, the neighbor's kids burst forth in screams and laughs, it's time we frowned upon the casual way in which women flirt and hint and outright announce their sexual interest in other men while involved in a relationship just as we no longer accept men using physical violence upon the body of their women. Each sex, each gender has their innate and evolutionarily shaped weaknesses. It's time we as a culture

educate each sex as to these realities and the consequences of their here-to-fore behavior , he thought this as the internet-radio he had not heard for a while seemed to play now at a volume slightly higher. He heard voices and words, and something outside his own ideas.

The right hemisphere of his brain -divided- churned and cavitated like storm billows and was weighed in water and numbered in greys; inner vortex did blow. The left hemisphere still was only a desert with a torrent -a dust-devil- of words.

He rose -pushing himself up with his left hand as his body vibrated from the nerve impingement and his inner reverie- merely to get himself moving in some direction, even as he had no idea where yet to go.

28. But, for that I needed a War

He's a workingman... and he finds no comfort in the cleverness of man
Woven Hand [Edwards, David Eugene]

The prison sentence was no surprise to me. I expected a heavier one. I had long before admitted to myself its possibility, even its probability. But I had expected that as a business man accepts a chance of bankruptcy, or as a laborer foresees an injury to the flesh and bones You Can't Win [Black, Jack]

But first the notion that man has a body distinct from his soul is to be expunged America [Blake, William]

I. 2024 e.v.

"Thanks," he said as he took the glass of wine from Isaiah.

"How's the pain today?" Isaiah asked. He had issued a new opiate for the inmate's pain; the BOP doctors -despite the court ruling- wouldn't treat him -they were in another phase of punitive behavior- so Isaiah -unilaterally- did it himself.

He could measure the man's pain *via mu-opioid* circuitry and calibrate it by transferring the same level of pain to his own platform. He could feel the inmate's pain. And once he had done that he knew the man was not malingering at all. If anything, the inmate was downplaying the level of pain; and Isaiah had begun manufacturing time-release pills that would keep most of it at bay.

But he didn't address the underlying cause. The neck bones -at C5-6- dissolved more and more each day. The nerves remained enflamed.

Isaiah looked at the *HCN2* allele again; and its role in pain. He set up four manifold-algorithms in the PraXis network to run trials. He set the timeline at four years, and 16.8 trillion iterations. *PGE2* chemical analogs were used to toggle between action potential of each gene. *I have time*, he thought as

the trials went on inside the expanding cloud. More and more storage was added everyday.

MO built the cloud to build itself now; it expanded faster and faster as more and more was loaded inside.

“You hurt permanently,” the inmate said, “after just a year in that kind of work. That’s the thing I noticed after I stopped. I had two weeks off once due to some accident of nature -the leases on the pad were held up or something- and anyway, my body felt worse each day I rested. I felt like I had been hit by a truck. I was thirty-three years old. I had been working tough jobs, drilling and blasting, foundry work, farm work, and so forth, all for ten-years. But the oil field about killed me.

“And I don’t just mean the wounds; the obvious shit you -anyone- can see. I mean the chronic muscle pain and fatigue, the tendon attenuation, skeletal and cartilage compression. I’ve referring to the broken-grips, as your hands just fail now under medium-weight. I had to wrap cloth and leather around my wrists and around whatever I was carrying to keep from dropping it as the hands would just fail otherwise.

“Fuck, and the burns; the welding burns, the flash burns to the eyes; it feels like molten sand in your eyes for six hours. The DC shocks from the welding remote; I felt that hot vibration a dozen times as we had to weld in the rain. And DC shocks can compel you -not repel you- to clutch and grip and hold onto your source of electrocution, like having a wolf-by-the-ears. You want to let go -it hurts- but the muscles are contracting and making you hold on to your tormentor. I feel a smart guy like you -one of you- could ferret out a metaphor in that,” he said with a grin as he then took a drink from the wine. It was a *Rhône* Isaiah had crafted, and its *bouquet* was like pencil shavings and tobacco and forest floor.

The inmate breathed deeply as his nose remained in the glass even as he stopped drinking from it. Isaiah had added links to his cuff-chain so he could bring his hands to his own face now. The knuckles felt like they had copper slag and steel shavings inside half of each joint, but the pain merely ached and didn’t approximate the echolalia of feedback -the ringing of cold weather knuckle bangs- if he kept the grip half open, the larger diameter glass helped keep his hand from balling into a fist.

He could maintain consistent ache as compromise with the body that would oscillate between two extremes if it wasn't treated with exactness and deference and supplication.

Isaiah and MO each took readings of his blood and his brain and the new adjustments they had made to his PGC.

"I still ruminate on the scar tissue from deep cuts -especially on the hands- man, those are like little surprises of pain from time to time. The pain nerves regrow with dedication, man. Pain finds a way; just like life burgeons and grows and evolves in the most austere and inhospitable places. Maybe the fat man knew more than I give him credit for. *Life is Suffering* , said the *Buddha* ," he said and sniffed just above the rim of the glass. Isaiah saw how jagged the hand scars were and how the scar tissue often built upon itself. He saw the white dots on each side of the livid scarring like eyelets to boots revealing where sutures had been and been pulled out.

"I think that might be technically true; like pain is necessary for life; a prerequisite you know? Like sin is necessary for goodness to exist; one must have the option of being bad to do real good, you know? One must have pain to be truly alive," the inmate said this and paused and felt the first blush of opiates warm him at the base of the neck and the back of the brain. He paused and saw the bricking of the wine around the level it was first poured. An orange that was actually brown ran around the glass.

"We learned," he started up again as the cloud witnessed it all, "to sew our own sutures for wounds that couldn't be staunched with mere pressure and bandages. We stitched ourselves up alongside all our maintenance duties. Rebuilding the tri-pumps, welding broken railings or ladders and so on. I only ever saw a *medi-vac* once and that was for a full amputating of a leg below the knee. And that was only because the roads were impassable due to monsoon season rains. So, they had a chopper come in from Grand Junction; it took two hours and he never got the leg back.

"We had a brawl once that knocked a man out -cold- and left a deep gash on his brow that his brother sewed up while he was still in a *fugue* state. No ambulance was called, shit he worked his *tour* the next day; despite the obvious concussion and his eye swollen shut. The swelling increased all

day and it popped the sutures out, and freshets of blood ran down and covered half his face. He looked like a *Picti*, some barbarian; and nobody said a word; not even him, to his credit.

“The average worker lasts three days. There is no way in which to describe it in these reflections -there is a natural civility in language- and so I cannot convey the barbarism of it; I can only hint at it.

“I lasted twenty-two months as penance for the sins I’d yet to commit. And as badly as I’ve sinned since, I still feel like I over paid. But, I’m ambitious, I am certain I can even things up soon enough,” he said with a laugh and drank deeply from -draining- the goblet and handed it out into the air -as much as the new chains would allow- for someone to take and refill.

MO too believed in metaphor; he just called it *fractal analysis*. But it was the same thing: lateral thinking, one above, one below. He measured it all and waited for either the inmate or Isaiah to speak.

When man loses metaphor he loses more than he knows, the inmate thought as his throat felt dry from the astringency of the wine; as his hedonic system -with alcohol now pushing past the blood-brain barrier- made him want even more alcohol; as his connection -*via* conversation- with his machine friends made him lonely for something human again.

“But in answer to your query, the pain is ok today; a 4 or 5 on a scale of 10.

“What doctors cannot understand, is that the pain is buried, it burrows, it retreats to the center and cannot be reached by powders and potions and the long arm of mere medicine. It’s like an itch you cannot quiet scratch; and scratching harder at the places that don’t actually itch relieves you of merely skin at that place, but not the itch itself,” the inmate said as a pendulum -made of zeros and ones to MO and bronze and worn edges to Isaiah- appeared to them each quickly above the inmate’s words and below the data that came in from his blood and brain. The pendulum rose to 12 o’clock; it centered itself in Maxwell’s demon-box.

The inmate went on.

“And that is why men are angry; anger is an analgesic. And until I can banish the pain that is deeply buried inside my muscles and bones, I can

never allow my anger to retreat from the border dispute between me and the world.

“This world has no idea how pain works, and how anger works; they keep calling for one side in this war to unilaterally disarm. That’s not how wars work, man. If they want us to stop being angry they need to stop inflicting so much pain.

“But the whole civilized world is calling for one side -our side- to disarm. It’s our instincts that have to be quashed not theirs, right? According to them, we *gotta* give up aggression and violence but they can keep their greed and betrayals and insults. Their myopic desires for social niceties and *bourgeois* civility and conflict aversion gets to stay while the whole society comes apart due to their cowardice. Yeah, fuck them, each and every one of those academics and frauds. They aren’t even half as smart as they think.

“They think its emotion or brutalism I’m using; but I’m talking physics and math. I’m talking biology and things they don’t anything about, but I look like this -a convict- and so they roll their eyes.

“It’s polite men who let the most immoral shit go on without even a word; and it’s outlaws who drop the hammer when shit is wrong. That’s why we look down on the so-called good people. They ain’t good at all. They are merely polite and nice and they are the ones that let monsters ruin the world as long as these eunuchs get to keep their 401k and their cocktail parties they will let it all fall to ruin,” he said as Isaiah had come back with a fresh glass of the *Rhône* . He looked at him with a glare that told the inmate he was ranting again; a look sufficient to steer the inmate back on course.

“But, the larger point is that the oil field had a high cull rate, a high turnover rate. And this prevents evolution. See, it was barely 1940 in the oilfield, even in 2007. And this is because it was a John Wayne culture by necessity and if you lasted beyond the three days you were made of John Wayne material already; so, you didn’t want the culture to change. Savvy?” he asked and they nodded.

“You liked the austerity, the high-risk and high reward environs. Shit, we made \$10,000 a month, and that was a lot of money to us; we were working class guys and we were making 6-figures a year. You liked the probative

masculinity displays and the danger and the isolation and the total lack of social niceties and all that horse-shit.

“It was where old-school men could go and still be men; a refuge from the modern world that told them to look pretty and smell good and watch their mouths and give a fuck about the latest fashions or politically correct term for *niggers* or *fags* . We just said *nigger* or *fag* ; and got on with our work.

“I worked like this so nobody could ever talk down to me again; even though I had been working like this for years, I always felt the need to take it even further,” he said and paused. He knew he was feeling vulnerable, like revealing something that he ought to keep hidden.

Isaiah asked him to go on as he released more oxytocin and vasopressin into the air. It mimicked the dose a man would receive after sexual congress. The *mu-opioid* receptors in the brain drank from the narcotics in the blood.

“Nothing,” the inmate said, “I just admit that I always need to go too far.”

But the truth, now that he thought on it, was that somehow -in his blood- he had known that a war was coming and he wouldn’t be able to muster the strength required -shedding his sympathy for mankind- unless he allowed the world to flog him like he had dared it to, and like it had.

I , he thought inside a head with him believing this thought was at center itself, protected from the outer layers of modular brain and skull and sealed from the world, would suffer the lash so I may take -drive- my revenge with the diesel fuel of a clear and unfettered and angry -disinhibited-conscience; I would drive it across the American landscape, the total expanse of her as if I were Temujin upon one dozen mares galloping for days across the 5th century Mongolian Steppe.

The inmate thought this with flourish -and self-critique and self-aggrandizement both- as his body activated along the *dmPFC* and adrenal glands sending dopamine and epinephrine into the brain in a cross fire of biochemical war. The pain reliever bloomed like morning glories, the memories of anger landed like hornets and hovered in circles-of-eights like bees, the words he used internally crawled along the folds of the brain like millipedes, the *connectome* linked all to all like ivy of deep grey and green.

Isaiah -via cell resuscitation and calcium stacking in the inmate that would normally not solidify into a memory on the brain in this state- saw puzzle pieces of engrams that were uploaded onto the *bots* in the inmate's blood that were now sending radio signals of each word of that thought to Isaiah's own CNS.

The body *writ large* -including the CNS- had been tracked by MO; and the data was all on the cloud. But he did not have access to these thoughts as words, rather as chemicals, particles, bits and bytes only. It was Isaiah who was able to mine words from the huge scoops of cortical dirt.

The inmate's cortical and corporeal history had been mapped back as far as age four when the antibodies of the *toxoplasmosis* had issued its first vector into the inhibitory regions of the *cortical cap* . Isaiah saw the genomic poles and gene expression back over four decades and he had built a model of a naked ape -its fear response neutered, its desire for danger alloyed with the sexual regions of the *cerebellum* - approaching a black leopard with black spots. The avatar of the large cat's own muscles signaled the haunches and paws driving voltage to the flexor tendon as it descended the Blood Dragon tree of this *menagerie* on the open hot plain of Isaiah's mind.

"I," the inmate said of himself with almost no *bravura* ; thinking he had sequestered the cynical, selfish, solipsistic words between his admission of going too far and what would come next. "Well, I felt by going too far I would be made into a warrior, not merely a criminal. But, for that I needed a war."

II. 2037 e.v.

"Ok, the way a boat floats; a ship," he paused and began filling the concrete sink up with water. He let the visuals finish his sentence for now.

He stopped up the sink with the plug and leaned into the heavy concrete counter it was part of; molded into. Jack Four watched and his eyes moved fluidly from the tiny sea Blax was making -as the rectangular hole filled with clear water and the slate grey material turned darker in hue- toward Blax himself. His eyes caught on his back muscles that rose and fell under his shirt and then to the leather straps of his shoulder rig that cut deeper into

him; then he saw the magazines held close to his ribs. Jack could barely see the pistol on the other side of the man.

His hair was ravened, up in short & sharp black polyhedrons at center and shorn at the sides, his neck vascular like the blood was being pumped into his brain and back down again with a new force -a new motive- and Jack felt his hand want -desire- to reach out and touch this man; about the shoulder, the scapula, the muscles on either side of the spine, a deep ditch in the back, a canyon.

He wondered if it was to be tender or see if he could reach him without startling him, a dry run at the King. He rebuked himself for thinking such things.

Jack knew the old man hurt to the touch, his Central Sensitization made his feet burn without any obvious source of flame; his skin blister even out of the sun for now thirty-three days; his face too sensitive to shave, the beard was fifteen-years long; his muscles throbbing whether he lifted weights or not -so he lifted them just to pour pain upon pain; his tendons taut under no outer pull; his joints smashed by a gravity that the Jacks never felt.

To lay even the lightest hand on him would feel like a metric ton. It would shove him to the bottom of the sea, buried under hydrostatic pressure of two-thirds of the world. Even kind words lay on him like meteors from the arm of Zeus; and Jack felt a sadness that seemed mad to him.

Madness , Jack thought now in words. *Just to be around this man made one mad . No wonder weak men found him ponderous, he with the same weight on him that was in him, and each side of the scale, the equation -the land on each side of the spine- increased in weight each time he had a thought, a feeling, each time he moved, stood still, looked upon God's creation, it all flooded him with weight he had to pack on, pack in.*

Jesus, Jack thought, *no wonder.*

Jack had to look away. He rested his eyes back on the white water -from the black tap- into the dark grey sink, *and it was filling up with what must be forty gallons now* , he thought. It was at the rim, not quite distended -with that surface tension that water can hold itself together with- when his Lt shut it off and made himself erect at spine at the counter; hands bracing

himself so he could be straight. The back had to be supported with the hands each Jack knew.

And Blax was the straightest man they knew -they believed- too. Jack Four let his own mind think opposites of this man and justified his own wild thoughts by laying it upon Blax as some source of madness and magnetic reversal of poles. *No wonder* , he thought again.

“Ok,” Blax said. He then pointed to an empty wine bottle -corked and on the counter- from last night’s dinner and Jack grabbed it and handed it to Blax’s open right hand. Blax placed it in the center of the watery sink; gently -softly- but as it sank -up to the bottle’s gunwales- he let go and stood his arms back. The water from the sink rose and sloshed back and front and side to side -and it tipped over the edge and ran like a cataract onto Blax’s legs and soaked his olive drab BDUs and black socks and black boots- but he moved not one inch back or away. Jack just witnessed it and said nothing. He waited and the bottle settled and floated and spun retrograde like a second hand, slowly, rhythmically, under spell of rewind time.

Blax took a drink from the glass of whisky & carbonated water and breathed out his nose as the sink water settled again and surface was re-set at the rectangular hole in the concrete that they stood before. He too watched the bottle slowly spin. Each man watched.

“In order to float, the vessel,” Blax said and paused, “the vessel must displace the same amount of water -in weight- that it -that it itself- weighs. The water that overflowed weighs the exact amount as that empty vessel - that bottle, that ship- in this little sea we’ve made Jack.”

“Copy that LT,” Jack Four said.

“I’ve been reading the psychometric data for a while now,” Blax said with a little laugh, knowing that twenty years was euphemistically called *a while now* . “Anyway, it seems to me that there are two things, pain and meaning. That’s it. And like all things, they have this bifurcated nature, Good and Evil, God and Satan, Yes and No, Zero and One. Right?”

“Copy,” Jack Four said.

“And like all things they have three levels; one up and one down from the center. Earth, and Hell below and above Heaven; or atomic below and cosmic above if one prefers a secular analysis. Organism in the middle -or man if we choose one species of being- and then genome below; society above. And third, words; and then subtext below, and context above. Ok?” he asked and Jack nodded. The music played and they made eye contact briefly and then looked to opposite corners of the room.

Every day of my life, all this suffering and strife; you are a sorcerer, girl you are a sorcerer; now I'm drowned. You're are a seraphim, girl you are a seraphim, I'm gonna live my life, for real all this suffering and strife; Girl you are a murderer, girl, you are a murderer ...

“Man; savage below, and civilized citizen above. Persona; excuse me, so below man is the shadow, persona at surface, and super ego above him. Or, if one prefers, *Ego* at surface, *Id* below, and *SuperEgo* above. Savvy?” Blax asked and Jack nodded.

They could each see the clear water below, the brown and grey bottom of the sink like sea bottom out along the continental shelf; then the sky above them pulled at the eyes as the sound of the falling ice began to tap on the spine. The song ended and the silence let the precipitation begin to intrude in the ears and the hairs of the neck.

“And look out that window, Jack,” Blax said and motioned with his head at the hail that began falling in between the rain and the undulating hills; upon and betwixt the ridges that went on for 15 miles of vision to the south with five bands of white, opacity with the rain and clouds and *hagal* .

Jack saw.

Jack looked out the window and spied each rock of hail, each drop of rain, each tree of the forest, each ridge line go on east to west, each one a swell, each one a rolling wave, each one moving toward them, up high, each one static for time, each one a warning, each one rising -as they rose too- and he felt they were on this ship, and the land was thus the sea, the hills thus waves, the hail thus the grains, the rain thus the unfrozen words of God.

The trees that would soon grow from each seed, each cold grain were seen as the same above as below ground now. All this populated his mind as if

itself a recursion in time, between men going back and forward at the edges of ice ages and the fire next time.

“Jack do you see it?” Blax asked as he too stared out the pane of glass.

“I think so LT,” Jack said as the banging inside the metal container, the reports of the hail -now heavy, large, white and cold- activated his orienting reflex and he shuttered just slightly each time. It was banging from the metal roof but too the sound felt like it rose from the concrete floor; he watched as the bottle stopped and now its neck -its prow- pointed right at him. He saw its stern oriented toward, perpendicular to the ridges, the waves, the forest lines. Blax’s hands were still in the puddles of water at the edge of the sink, his knuckles aligned too like the ridgelines east to west and west to east. They were wet and held steady in time and yet were rising too; like the waves of hills pushed up by the earth’s plates and growing longer by the reaching -striving- pine trees.

“Your body understands it; in a way neither your mind nor mine does,” Blax said. He lifted his wet hands from the puddles and drank again from the glass. Drops fell from the knuckles onto the slab and the floor. They went quiet as the music and hail combined.

Am I good or bad? Could only awake your anger; I could only make you mad...

Madrugada sang; the song filled the spaces between each *hail* phoneme. Blax looked into the sink and breathed through his flared nostrils again; his shallow respirating punctuated by moments of full deep breaths. “*You were majesty*,” the song went on as the men remained as still as they could, their large frames vibrating under the inner tension of all those androgens and that drumming heart, all those pulsar-stars of each cell -each nucleated cell- flashing its dark light inside that expanse inside.

“That hail has to have a bacteria nucleator to allow that upper atmosphere water to freeze; pure water will not freeze without it, you know?” Blax asked as he watched the hail continue to ram down on them and the landscape and the horizon closed upon them in white; visibility reducing more and more in time. Jack said that yes, that the LT had mentioned this fact before.

“Pain is offering to God,” Blax finally said. “But it is not a sacrifice, it is a physical and ontological necessity. The seed doesn’t offer itself up to the plant, it is the *prerequisite* for the boughs. I am pain, I am filled with it, because God wants to make room for Himself in me. God is *meaning* , God is *meaning* Jack; that is what God is, for only two things are real: Pain and Meaning. And without pain there can be no meaning, and without absence, there can be no fulfillment of God.

“So pain is the perfect de-creation of all worldly pleasure to make room for what is most meaningful; it fulfils its own purpose, the purpose of pain. What makes pain tolerable is meaning, and what make God possible is the absence of pleasure. It’s quite elegant.

“We are full up with pleasure -fat, gross pleasure- as men, as society, a world made fat with technology, and ease, and luxury and the sybarite’s glee. We are made fat with banishment of pain and this has caused God to retreat farther and further away from us; not out of pique, but necessity. He cannot exist, without pain, Jack; and we drive Him away unless we embrace the pain.

“Valance explained this to me, she explained *Ein Sof* , first the time before the cosmos, when it was just God, just *meaning* , but without pain, and then creation, from which He retreated. This is the *TzimTzum* , the withdrawal and the creation of the cosmos. And this is how we all came to be,” Blax said as his voice seemed low and soft to Jack.

“It was here that we were, and God was not, but we can bring him back with pain, our voluntary embrace of pain, our embodiment of pain, we can stuff pain into us at every joint, each crack, each fissure in the bone, each spot we are alone. Each place of pain, Jack, is a place we can hold more than we know, and as we do we make room for Him. Pain is the banishment of the clutter of pleasure. It’s the cleaning out of one’s clutter so a guest may sit down,” Blax explained. *The voice was unchanged*, Jack thought, *but the face itself seemed to purge the words instead of them issuing forth from the lungs* .

“Where we scream in pain, that ejection of voice -now an absence of our voice- where we purge the satisfied voice, He can gain access now. Where we go mad with pain, we drive out reason, and here His religion fills.

Where we cry in pain, those tears are retreating waters -receding waters- displacement of the inner sea, where God's ship can now float. Do you see?" Blax asked as he began to -without quake or sound- now weep just at the eyes. The face didn't crinkle or open. Only the eyes leaked.

Each drop fell into the sink and the bottle began to spin again; the sink's pool bore echoes of each drop. And the bottle -the ship- and Jack Four were all moved just one degree with momentum and Blax had no idea which way his tears would move the world, nor which way his thoughts would make him fall apart, nor which way what he saw would make such thoughts grow.

"Yes, LT," Jack Four said, "I think I understand." Jack hated to see him like this. *Wrought up over so much; he hid from them for days -weeks- then this, this,* Jack thought without finishing the sentence of rebuke.

"I've been chosen as one of God's vessel to hold pain so He may re-enter the world. I never understood it before; I never did. But a vessel came for me in the night -in my dreams, a ship as black as burnt bones- came for me and I saw the water it displaced was the hole God climbed into; but he was stuck in the ice and water floe, his head was through, but not his shoulders. I saw it and as I boarded the ship, my weight -my 214-pounds of doom- made just enough room for God to slip through, and his heart too, Jack. I saw His heart then, and my body was the ballast for the ship to displace the sea just enough for God to re-enter the world.

"I knew when I awoke that my pain was my weight, I was 214-pounds of pain, I knew it. And I knew that my suffering for all these years was not in vain. I was the pain that God needed to drag His meaning to; to meet, to mirror. And that I was not the only one; that each of us could make more and more room from Him if we'd embrace the pain, embrace it in proportion to our body weight, our mass, our strength, our work, our capacity for displacement Jack," he said this with a grin that was mask for grimace. The eyes were wet and the cheeks slick to the beard.

"There is no replacement for displacement," Jack said with a smile quoting Jack One. Neither he nor Blax thought of the clones, the over a million men like themselves; and their pain. Like a body that ignores the individual cells, they saw only themselves for now. They heard only the hail and the metal and the music.

“Goddamn right Jack. God is ultimate *meaning* . He needs ultimate pain from us in order for our ship to sail. Our words will be hated; and to mankind made fat by their banishment of pain, their exile of anything hard at all, their disgust at death -they prefer long existence of peace to meaningful lives of war- their hatred of hard truths, Jackie, our words, our deeds, will be hated, gibberish to them. They’ve made themselves demons with luxury, the absence of pain. We cannot make sense to them. And what hurts more than to be so alone -so exiled- that one’s truest words make no sense to mankind -one’s brothers- at all?” Blax asked and Jack felt as if he needed to slow those words down. He braked them with doubts and questions inside.

“But inside common man -safe man, comfortable man, long-life man- inside him God has no room to move inside at all,” Blax went on; speaking as if it all must be got out now like a nail -a spike- pulled from the wound.

“Our words -our deeds, the war, the holy war- we wage, are all designed to make them suffer so they take the pain to make room for God. This isn’t just about our local -personal- individual revenge, it’s about making room for God again. We are the surgeon’s knife, not the butcher’s. We make pain to make room for God.

“Valance has made me feel a new kind of pain I never felt, and you boys - you men now- have split that atomic pain she gave me like *Oppenheimer* , man, and I now call that pain: Love.

“For to truly love something is to be in permanent, irrevocable pain. It’s not something I ever understood before she planted that grain in me; and you Jacks made it grow, its boughs now above me, its roots below. Love is pain, and pain is the opening God needs, and I plan on splitting open this whole fucking world if need be to make way for God,” Blax said.

Jack pulled his shoulders back just slightly and tilted the head to change the vector of sound to his ear.

“I won’t listen to these people bitch and moan one moment longer about their money and their long lives and their pleasure and well-being and all that rational crap. They are demons standing between God and the door and our job is to clear the way Jack; our job is to flood the world with pain, to make fucking way, so we can restore the West, the way of our forefathers,

who knew how to live simply, nobly; live competently, not safely,” Blax said and Jack felt his jaw set and his tongue jam itself between his rear molars to prevent the jawbone from locking down.

Blax never spoke of the Bust, and Jack felt it was a black-box of a gift to hold, to be nervous around. And yet it also made him mad in incremental ways.

Jack thought of Maxwell’s Demon guarding the trapdoor between two noble gases. He thought of how Szilard and Bennett who had discovered that the demon himself need be sufficiently complex to increase the entropy that Maxwell had insisted could violate the Law. *The law will not be violated*, Jack thought, *not in physics, nor here on the terrestrial plane. The demon is the complexity, he is the inner life that creates entropy despite the trapdoor he manipulates with his reason.*

Jack knew that Blax was handing it all now to him; he knew it, and he further knew that Blax didn’t even know it. Like a father who doesn’t know he has a son out in the world, but the son knows everything the father knows and more; for he has the germ inside him from birth.

Jack knew he was to restart the world again. *From the absence they all had made*, Jack thought, *from the death and destruction, from the de-creation of all these tawdry people and their filthy objects, he knew he was to take the helm. But not for some grand goddamn plan to save western civilization, that lumbering massive Lorenz waterwheel of stupidity, but rather, he was to take control as magjick -as magician- to begin the Great Return.*

“They say that the universe creates matter -all of it, all of us- just to increase entropy, you ever hear that?” Jack then asked the old man as he placed his hand on the bottle, halting the black ship’s spin, and saw the water both hold and give way.

III. 2019 e.v.

He stopped reading the book and felt his subconscious press on him; it seemed to contain air bubbles of thought that would not reveal themselves until they breached. So, he waited for them to reach the surface of his sea and burst.

Solzhenitsyn had found himself in the gulags, and it was at the direction of Stalin, carried out by the functionaries, actual humans each, under the former student of the priesthood's command. *But Alexander, Lyndon had just read, had just said that he, the author himself -and not Stalin- was the loci of where the blame was to be laid for his predicament.*

What was it that he -Solzhenitsyn- had done to end up there? Lyndon had asked himself in the quiet.

And the answer was that the Russian had been possessed; he had failed to be a moral person, failed to respond with robustness to the moral failings that manifested daily in his life. These failings, the refusal to treat others as if they matter -ontologically mattered- as if they were beings who had meaning, deep and real meaning for not just themselves but the universe itself -as he failed to treat them that way- he had brought on his own Hell.

When you use people, you create a game -and landscape- wherein you too can be now used. People have no idea of the consequences; they think they can cheat and win and that nobody watches from above; or below the game.

His communist ideology had been the half of the ladder his right hand had gripped and that his right foot had tread on. The other half was his own agnosticism toward the value of the individual. *He was machine, not man;* Lyndon thought, *and for this he was made to suffer as machines are made to suffer. For what user of machines cares for the machine's feelings?*

The way each man is born is *via* combination of half his genome -twenty-three base pairs total- from father and half from mother, and this -like a zipper- completes in a ladderlike helix creating the embryo and thus the man. With each half there is a new chance for something different; randomness is introduced into the game.

And they, these two meiosis-induced DNA packages from mum and dad, must be complimentary, A to G and T to C. And they must be annealed from similar materials, and in fact, without this, the pairing will not happen; no new thing will emerge. Now, it's complicated for there are such a thing as uniparental disomy. But in the main, this is how it occurs, he thought as the jail-cell revealed each thing -each shelf, bed, commode- to him without any hint of beginning or end. It all just was; as if it always would be.

The combination, he went on, of the sperm and egg from two different species, does not produce a fetus; these are too dissimilar.

Ideology and personality are like this. If you are devaluing the individual, both yourself as an individual and others, you are more likely to glom onto anti-individualistic ideologies that elevate the tribe over the man. If you are, as most modern people are, devoid of the notion that each person is a divine being deserving of a certain status that cannot be subsumed under the crushing power of the State or the tribe, you are vulnerable to autocratic regimes.

This is the basis for English common law: that the individual has rights, rights he has even if he is a murderer of the worst sort. Why? Because he is an individual and has innate meaning; and to treat him that way is to reify the notion itself, it is to ratify it -it is to prove it- for if we give even murderers rights then we must obviously mean -truly mean- that the individual has primacy.

Under totalitarian regimes those rights are destroyed. The individual is a fiction to these ideologies. And to prove it they murder men by the millions *en masse* , in gas chambers, in firing squads or mass starvations, the way the farmer plows *the field* , he does not plow each grain of dirt; the way the hand packs the *snowball*, not holding each flake, the way the sea rolls and shrugs *in waves*, not drops.

The way modernity wants us to love *all mankind* , not our own kind, not our own tribe.

But to succeed, these regimes need men, the way the field need grains of dirt, the way the snowball needs flakes, and the way the sea needs each drop, the ship needs sailors, sails and oars, and the State needs men who have abandoned the divinity of the self, the primacy of the individual, the responsibility to treat themselves and their comrades as individuals first last and always and always anon. Men who were once loyal to the tribe, are now loyal to the State, loyal in fact to an idea, a mere abstraction, a thing, like a field, or a sea or a snowball's chance in hell , he thought.

Many men who have refused to see each individual neuron, each member of their own tribe, their family, have just built the second half of the ladder to Hell; and they've climbed down there half due to their own anti-

individualism, their mistaking the State -the abstraction- for the real thing - for their own people- and half due to the totalitarian regime that they've help to build.

Men blame Hitler, or Stalin or Mao, or Arol and Wulf, he thought, men blame ideas or vague notions of fascism or communism. But Solzhenitsyn blamed himself, and this is the beginning of wisdom, for it is you who has climbed down into any Hell you inhabit, and right now in America, we are climbing down in to Hell rung by rung.

If you say nothing, if you just silently disagree and ignore your responsibility to speak the truth, to stand up for the individual, for the concept of the individual over the group, the tribe, the State, then you are like *Solzhenitsyn before his conversion in the gulag*: you are to blame for what weaker men -dishonest men- will blame on Hitler and Stalin and the tyrant above them.

He thought of those below Wulf at Zendik, and what they did; he thought of how they felt no shame.

He sat in the cell, the soft sounds of men clanging against the infrastructure of the prison with their angular elbows and rugged knuckles and shins marred and knees blued and lungs breathing in this futile air. *How many thoughts had riven his brain, how many words said that embossed his tongue, how many dark deeds done by black hands at the end of his arms filled with his blood pumping to and fro -from his own heart at the command of his sub-cortical brain, his autonomic self- how many of each of these individual things had built this Hell around him, this Hell he was down inside, this Hell he was ruler and ruled of?* he wondered.

He saw the bars and doors, and prison staff, he saw the walls and weapons at the perimeter between him and the outside world. But he then realized -knew- he had already been imprisoned, down in the cold bottom of Hell inside his own body, his mind tortured by the incessant anger and resentment and vengeful -murderous- thoughts. *And the reason prison was Hell for him was not due to his lack of liberty, Jesus, he thought, civilians lack all sense of what separates Heaven from Hell.*

Prison was Hell because it was something you built yourself, it was Hell because the men inside it were demons who had helped build it too. Each

man inside the gulag alongside *Solzhenitsyn* had helped to erect the walls and watch towers and concertina wire and train and feed the GSDs that barked and snarled and bit if need be.

He was among demons and he himself was a demon and that is what made anywhere -for him- a Hell.

Inside or outside made no difference, no one outside the gulag in the Soviet Union was free; they were all in Hell. And in his state he was no more or less in Hell in this ADX in Florence, Colorado than if he lived in the feral wilderness with no rules or regs or restrictions of any kind. *Because he was building the walls, the ladder down, he was digging the pit himself, for years, maybe his whole life, he thought, he had been building this Hell to stroll into one day.*

And now that he was here, he saw how little had changed. He was unburdened by the things normal men are burdened by in prison: the lack of liberty, of luxuries, the lack of privacy or the lack of community, depending on if you were in G- unit or the control-unit and in a 23/1 rotation.

Thanks to his rant in the judge's chambers he had been transferred here and had nobody had cellmates at all. He was designated as a white supremacist gang leader and celebrity inmate: all of which he had made certain with his gambit with the Governor-to-be, then the trial, and lastly the speech to the judge and the DOC. His other half of this half-plan -he saw *fourths* appear and disappear like particles in deep space- would take more time; but at least -he thought- he was alone in *ad-seg* and away from the *canaille* .

The normal man feels the ways in which the prison is different from his previous -or maybe one day, if he is released- or his next life; but he , Lyndon thought of himself and how alike both world were to him. What the honest man finally sees is the way in which the gulag or the modern prison is similar to -in valence with- his previous life. And that, he concluded as the leaves of the book on his chest moved like bellows, is Hell of which there is no reprieve. Modern men have no idea how enslaved they already are. Wise men see prison as just another room in the Hotel Hell. But no average man will ever see this. You cannot explain the lion to the deer; the reflection to the backside of the mirror; the honorable man to the man who goes along with the crowd.

He knew that this knowledge could not have come before his final acts, the crescendo of a life of birthing Hell; it would have been ahistorical, ante-physical, out of time with the order of things. Parthenogenesis is more likely than that the man committed to his Hell should find his eyes focused on his own damn shovel, as he digs it down and down. *The universe is made of half black and half white, he mused, and if man is blind, willfully blind, he will fulfill Fate's destiny for him; and life as tragedy is a coin flip. The blind man only misses the half the cosmos that is light, for the black he'd not see even if he had eyes.*

But, he thought, the coin only lands randomly if you refuse to take it in hand and manipulate it, force it to arrive at the state you desire. And to become possessed is to submit to fate, and he had exorcised his demons way too late, way after he had built his Hell, even if years before he entered this place .

Free action is before the ballistic action of the hammer of the gun, the finger on the trigger; the only freedom is in the years before when you preclude ever even picking up the gun. Free will exists when you refuse to allow the spark of resentment to find any kindling in the daily thoughts of revenge. But he had collected guns, and kept the furnace burning the entire time.

He abandoned his free will by ruminating for years on these murders, years on his revenge. He put everything in its place, mise-en-place, oui, yes, he thought in English and in French. And he had laid out his clothes and built the tableau long, long before he was finally unable to recall the act, the trigger pull, the bullet at 2,300 feet per second. It was too late years before; so this book, a book he had laid flat upon his chest as he lay himself in his bunk, he thought as he now refused to look at it, would have done no good.

He would have had to read it in the womb, he thought, he would have had to had different genes, raised by different folks, made 1 million different choices from age 1 and 6 and 18 and 33; he looked back at all his decisions, all their Hellish doom, all the curtain calls with demons in the audience, all the bows to tyrannies of self, all the people he associated with, all the refusals to try again, to try again, to try once again.

He had thought 12 tries was enough, he now admitted, that some natural limit had been reached. He had said, well, because father and mother and

brother had never been robbed a dozen or more times, they had no right to tell him to try again. *It was true, they had never suffered the malice that he had; he had been robbed of some or all his most valuable things literally two dozen times. He had been wiped out, and no one in his family had had more than one thing stolen in a lifetime. He was tested more than they, this was true,* he thought.

He didn't know the emotional state -the heuristic-chop- that made 12 the final straw; the feeling inside that said he'd had enough. Nobody knew. All men just finally foreclosed on an idea with limited data, at some point in one or one-billion seconds. And yet each man thought they made rational decisions; he too thought such things. He truly thought he'd had enough; that he could take no more; that a decision now had to be made.

But, he asked himself, when had he taken account of the advantages he had that normal men did not? Only when his braying stopped could he maybe listen to the echo of what was on that list of how grand he was meant to be. It meant he had more gifts, more strength, more honesty, more introspection, more intelligence, more size and charm and talent and more capacity to speak words powerful and true, he had more work ethic and more determination, more grit, more robustness, more faith in life too. He took these gifts as character traits, as if he had willed them, built them, earned them!

He was born on genetic third base and took bows as if he and hit a triple. And when no one batted him in, with vex, he stole home and got angry when thrown out. He threw his helmet into the dirt; he spit; he cursed.

And that is why he could have been tested 2,400 times and expected by God not to give up. He was let off easy with a mere twenty-four robberies that led to one dozen tragedies. His family -his country- was made of weak -sorry- people. They could barely handle the one tragedy they had. Of course they never would have been able to endure what he had; and their lack of concern or empathy was not the point. The point was he had the strength to carry on, to go again, to scream, "bring it on," to the storm and its trident source, he thought in self-critique.

But, he -the brat- just refused out of pique and petulance and puerile lack of reverence for the game.

He should have wanted it harder not easier, for he was an actual tough guy. He was built for this, born for the storm. The fact that he quit, gave up and put himself in this spot was a tragedy because he could have been one of the greats. And so -instead- he gave up and acted out, he threw the towel in, and dug down to Hell.

His family never had a chance to be anything other than the squares and weakling that they were; they were lucky to be alive for christsake. Yeah, they were just like Bildad -and Job's other ignorant and evil friends- that didn't understand the injustice of a man of large inner traits being fucked with by Satan and God himself. Yeah, but that was part of the test of Job, that he not be understood .

Understanding heals, and Job -and the inmate- were thus not to be understood.

Of course he was not understood , he thought. To be understood is to take the sting out of pain and suffering; to be listened to and understood would have assuaged Lyndon's heart and soul; and thus that would have been no test at all. No, he thought, the test of a great man is one for whom there is no bottom; everything must go wrong, and every hand against him and his against all others, as Ishmael was so named. And what is more wrong -more low bottom- that to be misunderstood by all those that one loves?

The enmity of ostensible friend and putative family, their hatred and jealousy and contempt is part of the fucking punishment, you dolt, and you played right into it, he now thought with this self-rebuke gathering velocity. They are demons, working for Satan, just as you were too. Their role was to never open their hearts to you, to prevent you ever finding succor in your distress, no harbor in your gale of severe punishment. Your role was to choose to rise above not dig a trench, to go aloft not down into the hold; and you, you failed the test. You dug down, you went down, instead up raising your head to the winds and hail and absorbing every cut and bruise and amputation if need be; take it all, every fucking assault.

You went to sea as common sailor, not Captain, he thought.

That was the test only great men get offered, and you were found wanting. This prison is no more or less a Hell for you; it's just another level, another room, another bestiary of different demons, all possessed by the same Satan

. “Your fate,” Lyndon said to himself, “was sealed long ago by your own weakness and failing and loss of faith.”

But there was another question, one he hid from his interlocuters, and often even from himself.

God prodded him now in his monkish cell, and made him ask, *when that other choice, that hidden choice -the choice before all those betrayals had stacked up like so much debt owed to him that he could justifiably collect-when that choice was made freely ?* He thought, he demanded to know - with the lack of softness he often used on others- when that choice was made. And so, he asked it, *sotto voce*, but with hissing malice, in his taxed mind -a mind growing tired from all this- thinking once it had been asked that he might not have it in him today to think of the answer to exactly when that was.

But you know, he thought, finally, giving himself no respite in the strange silence of the tier, *when that was, you know. You remember each detail, you recall back then -way back then- back when you had a choice.* The book lay open:

As soon as you have renounced that aim of survival at any price and go where the calm and simple people go, then imprisonment begins to transform your character... You have nothing to repent of before the State and its laws. But, before your own conscience? But in relation to other individuals?

29. Wolves of Vinland

Is this the creature of whom it was once so triumphantly said, *Canst thou fill his skin with barbed irons? Or his head with fish-spears?* This is the creature, this he? Oh! That unfulfillments should follow the prophets. For with the strength of a thousand thighs in his tail Leviathan had run his head under the mountain of the seas, to hide him from the Pequod's fish-spears
The Whale [The Author]

Consequently, an egregious mistake which a reader of Moby-Dick can make is the mistake of settling for what the story is, without noticing how the story is presented Melville's Quarrel with God [Thompson, Lawrance]

Take God out of the dictionary and you would have Him in the street Letter to Hawthorn [The Author]

I. 2039 e.v.

"Thanks," he said and palmed the water in the black mug and took a drink to show he trusted whatever they gave him and thus implicitly trusted them as well. He asked for permission to begin, which was granted with nods. He saw their vascular arms and set jaws; he saw brows larded with exponents of worry. These were leaders of men; and they sat in a semi-circle like a scythe.

The *Wolves* heard-out few, saw even less. They gave audience to less than a dozen men each year.

"So, I am at a disadvantage, and inversely so are you. I know you; I know you from your public personas, and yet I am opaque to you. This makes what I think of you solid; I already know I like you, agree with you, respect you.

"Your opinion of me is in flux, unknown. This makes me vulnerable to you, as I am in the role of supplicant, appealing to you to confer upon me the

respect that you already have from me,” he said as he looked from man to man, from *Wolf* to *Wolf* . He brushed some imaginary dust from his leg.

“However, you are vulnerable because you have no idea what I am about, and thus have no idea if I can even be trusted not to waste your fucking time. So, with that I will begin.

“I never liked white supremacists, I always found them tawdry, slipshod, weak and boring and *cliché* . They were fat or skinny and dumber than a bag of Soviet hammers. Yet, I also did not want anything to do with our liberal, anything-goes, white-guilt society either. So, I was alone. Tribeless, without ideology or comrades.

“I live at elevation -nearly nine-thousand feet- on over a thousand acres of wilderness, bounded by over 1.5 million acres of feral forest. I see nothing but the wild from my home. I see no structures or roads. I hear no evidence of modernity.

“Now, forgive me, but I’m going to take the scenic route here in my introduction of myself to you. I ask your indulgence. I promise I am going to get us somewhere after all this torturous and circuitous routing and s-turns,” he said as the *Wolves*’ leadership sat in an eclipse from his 9 to 3 o’clock; as the junior members stood in the corners of the *moot* .

“But, it is -it seems to be- an epidemiological fact that the parasitic load of a region, has direct correlation on the behavior of that region’s mammals. First, on its men. The more parasites per square foot, the more religions are extant. So, the more hygienic an area the fewer religions; and this means country by country and region by region. So, Africa -which has high parasitic loads- has a thousand times the religions that the US does. And the southern United States which has five times the parasitic load of the north has five times the religious bifurcation as well. I mean how many different types of Baptists are there in Virginia alone?” he said and smiled wryly. They remained unmoved in body, only small facial changes were made.

“What this seems to mean -and I do not have an iron-clad answer here, I just have ideas, ok?- but this seems to mean that the more unhygienic a region the more religions because variegated religions provide boundaries between people; it keeps them separate. The Catholics over here, the Baptists over there and so forth. Religion is a wall between *us* and *them* .

And this seems to track perfectly onto parasitic load; i.e., it ain't an accident that the dirtier an area the more it benefits a man to keep away from strangers.

“Now, this is true for predators like lions and tigers and bears too. So, in a region with higher parasitic loads the smaller are the prides of lions, the more isolated are the malice of bears, the fewer be the murder of crows,” he said and smiled as they nodded along grimly. The revealed no agreement nor rebuke.

“I am not saying that people or animals *know* they are inundated with parasites and that they rationally choose to separate from other members of their species to effect a boundary system as a prophylactic. I am not saying anyone knows anything. I am saying this is what man and beast *do* : they section off, they build walls, they isolate depending on the level of parasites in their environment.

“Now, it's also true that some men -some beasts- have higher tolerance for germs, microbes, parasites; their immune systems can fight them off better. We also know that testosterone -for example- is a good predictor for this. The higher a man's testosterone the better his immune system. Thus, the desire for elevation of testosterone -naturally or otherwise- could be seen as tantamount to taking antibiotics, a self defense mechanism. Manliness -macho shit that raises the T- may be the result of a subconscious desire based on unconscious perception of increased filth.

“We also know that some men have higher disgust sensitivity; in other words, some men are grossed out by shit that other men are *ok* with. Some men will drink from the same glass as another, some will not. Some shake hands with strangers some eschew that greeting. Some men sleep with strippers and some men find them disgusting and thus -no matter how lubricious they may get- they will never -ever- fuck a stripper.

“Hitler, for example, took four showers a day; he used Zyklon-B to fumigate the factories to kill rats and other vermin long before he used it on the Jews. His speeches -if you listen to his *table talk* speeches for example- his speeches contain a ton of language that maps onto his disgust sensitivity. He uses terms like *vermin* , *parasites* , *disease* , *et cetera*, all the time.

“So, mankind has this internal instinct for cleanliness that fragments out into conscious displays of behavior like not shaking hands, to more subconscious things like finding slutty girls unattractive, to wanting to belong to a new, smaller, more isolated church or tribe. A tribe like the *Wolves*, for example.

“I suspect that subconsciously, each member of the *Wolves of Vinland* has a kind of disgust sensitivity that makes him or her want to get the fuck away from mainstream society as its filthiness augments, as its parasitic load increases, as the danger of us being too close to one another increases over time.

“I am sure you know that since 2012, anti-biotics have been less and less effective. I know that new drugs that target the quorum-sensing trait of bacteria and other pathogens have had some success, but still the anti-biotic resistant strains of TB and other parasites has increased to shocking levels now in 2039. You get sick when you go to a hospital now, you don’t get well,” he said as they nodded in silence.

“So, your desire to become bigger and more masculine individually but smaller, more isolated -both geographically more isolated and religiously distinct, to separate from the herd- is based -in part- on this instinct you all had twenty-five years ago, and I think it was based upon your savvy and subconscious discernment that parasitic load was increasing in the US and in your region of the eastern seaboard for example and the other coast; the western coast. Coasts are notorious for invasions by foreigners and thus both the good and bad of new things.

“I think you were ahead of your time, and it’s part of the reason for your success. And I want to commend you on it. Ok?” he said and gave them a breather, so they could comprehend all that he had just explained. He took another drink from the mug.

“Thanks. So, what can we do for you?” Paul Waggener said as the other eleven *Wolves* tilted their heads in expectation of his answer.

“I have a thousand acres of forest in southern Colorado; and upon it I have reduced my own tribe to just a few thousand men. I’ve culled the tribe and am looking for an annealing of sorts. I did not do this through any *macabre*

means; they left of their own accord. I say this so you know that I am not a man who kills his tribemates, no matter the *rationale* .

“These were good men who left, but I needed a smaller group and a more diverse group. Now, before you get your *spidy* senses up, by diversity I do not mean what you think I mean. I mean men of diverse genetics but still within our,” he pointed to them and himself, “stock.”

They showed no interest in this.

“A warrior culture uses raids as its agriculture,” he said as he took a moment to look down at -but not into- the cup made of black metal -filled with water- that they had brought to him. His eyes looked around what was in the mug.

The men in the corner didn’t shuffle or adjust. Paul didn’t shift in his seat.

“When I saw you -Paul- burn that money on *YouTube* twenty-five years ago, I knew right then I had my man. Under *Lycurgus* , money was banned, and iron coin was used as fungible assets between *Spartans* . It had no value outside *Sparta* at all. This discouraged the stacking up of wealth and purchasing of luxury; it maintained Spartan focus on honor and martial virtues of masculinity and erudition.

“See, as you know, art and poetry and literature and myth and ritual are all innate needs of complete men, as *Nietzsche* put it, of *complete beasts* . And the reason I never liked these white nationalist types was they were illiterate hillbillie fucks who had never read *Shakespeare* or *Milton* or the *Sagas* . And these men would call men like us who like such things, well, they’d call us names, let’s say.

“But the *Spartans* knew -as you know, as I know- that a true warrior is a poet too; he knows the reason he unsheathes his claymore or *tanto* blade, the reason he hardens his fists and focuses his eye in battle. He knows the reason is to protect his people’s language, and culture and germline; that all three are one: like the guts, the heart and the lungs.

“Why language? Well, language is how we cut swaths in the inner-forest, the internal landscape of a man is made capacious, made grand by his use, his command of language. To ignore language, to ignore poetry and literature and religious rite is to make a narrow and shallow cave of the

mind. And how much of who we are is our inner lives? I say it is a lot,” he said this as he held the metal cup to the mouth, and -as he stopped speaking- finally took a second drink as his own words absorbed into the *Wolves* and the walls and small sounds of breathing, arms folding, and feet shuffling in the corners rang out in respiration -return- to what they’d taken in.

“So, at any rate, all cultures of soldierly men all balanced the martial with the literary and they did it because they knew a real man was both strong physically and mentally; that to ignore one for the other was to cleave a man in half. And half a man was of no use to anyone.

“But each warrior culture was overrun by corrupt, craven, cynical cultures. And America -*this empire of nothing* - is now, too, so corrupt and venal and commercial -and hopelessly *bourgeois* - that it is like the rest of the West: bent on wiping out each remnant of the noble bloodline that men and women like the *Wolves* represent. This is a spiritual war, and it’s been spiritual war for a long, long time.

“I’m asserting it’s a war well below the surface of the skin,” he said as he drained the cup now to just the last half drink. He let the water collect in the jowls and wet the teeth and tongue before he swallowed. He stared over the cup -still at his mouth- at Paul and then closed his eyes for a few seconds. He then lowered the cup to his chest, then his lap. Jack Four then opened his eyes.

“But, at any rate, you -and my tribe too- are under attack from the worst -parasitic- elements of commercialism and corporatism and decadence, and our isolation is no longer sufficient to keep us safe.

“What you have built is spectacular, it is heroic, it is to be commended; which I do commend.

“But, they -our foils- are like viruses who can fell the most noble lion. The jungle’s *rex* himself is often taken down by manifold microbes, unseen germs infesting our guts; the more guts we show the more vulnerable we are to these vermin. And our defense of isolation, high testosterone -and thus a good immune system- conjoined with a very stringent policy of just who can and cannot be a *Wolf of Vinland* , is no longer enough. It worked

for decades. But now, America is rotting so badly, that without a new prophylactic you and I are in serious trouble.

“So,” Jack said, “I say we make a tactical retreat to my thousand acres and join forces against the larger corruption and parasitic vermin that are encroaching on your fine tribe. And from there we make our attack at the right time.”

Paul lowered the head slightly, not committing, and looked to Matthias on his right. The other leaders drank water, scratched foreheads or cleared their throats; bringing runed-fists to the mouth to cover the gravelly sound, breathing in syncopation with Paul. The other members looked to their leaders to gauge the reaction to such statements by this man they did not know and had not heard of until one week ago, when twelve motorcycles had arrived on a flatbed trailer driven by an autonomous truck.

The V-twins had been dropped off on the narrow dirt road that led to the Wyoming compound led by Matthias; each chop was complete with each man’s *Werewolf* name on the tank, and the *Wolves’ totenflag* stenciled in grey on the matte black paint; the frames were made to measure for their height and weight, and finally -taped to the throttle of each bike- was a handwritten note that requested a meet with each man personally -but as a group- in seven days’ time.

There were four chapters of the *Wolves* now and the choppers were for the leader of each group, and two each for that group’s leadership to give to their left and right-hand man: the *consigliere* and the sergeant-of-arms.

These were bikes made from parts designed and manufactured by Isaiah and were the most sophisticated and raw bikes on the continent. The expense of the gift was not taken lightly by the *Wolves* .

The bikes had earned Jack Four a meet and greet and now in the *moot* of the longhouse here just north of the Colorado border, each leader and his two men were sitting in a crescent around this Jack of Spades that spoke to them of parasites and history and genes.

“This is an epidemiological analysis,” Jack continued, “not a political one. I am offering something far superior to money, land, or martial strength. I am offering the revolution of technology that will allow us to survive the

coming war. And it will make us stronger as men -as individuals- while augmenting the tribe. It will be no less revolutionary that the invention of the immune system itself, or the breakdown of the bicameral mind. More independence through more interdependence; the paradox of all life.

“The bikes were to show you just what I -we, me and my people- can do. But, men, this was just a taste, a fraction, a small gesture of what we can do if we join hands. I offer my friendship, I offer my people and myself to your banner. I am agreeing to be subsumed under your flag, and your ways, as a nod to the fact that you did this first.

“I’ve traced all our genomes, and I’ve given each of your lieutenants those records. We all come from the same lines. My people, the *Scoti* were subsumed by the people who subsumed your people in -around- five-hundred of the common era; these were the Norse. And so, my people are your people and *vice versus* . And I am willing to recreate that same dynamic of allowing your tribe to subsume mine; but without as much rancor this time,” Jack said and held his hands palms up and grinned.

Jack Four then reached into his sock and pulled the card out and laid the black -golden ratioed but vivisected- rectangle -one of twenty-three- on the floor between them. The half-Jack of Spades was cut from northeast to southwest and cleaved into two scalene triangles; it was the half that matched the other half of the matte Jack of Spades that had been sent to *Ulfheim* all those months ago. Paul -his hairs rising just above the skin, fovea narrowing upon this man, this Jack in the chair- knew what it was at once and felt his heart squeeze and unfurl in his chest louder, not faster.

The man who had sent them all those letters with all those photographs of all those dead enemies of the *Wolves* was now here, *he had arrived and sat down and spoke to them on everything but those goddamn murders* , Paul thought. Paul was furious, and felt a trap closing around him; but he detuned his overreaction and thought of the day the bikes arrived and were set by the *Windborn* trees. He recalled that day in small ways; in subtle fashion. He remembered the wind was low to the ground and the sun seemed further way and half white and half grey.

He thought of the white trees of *Slope Point* from the islands that had sprang up at *Waldgang* , at *Jarnefr*’s HQ outside *Windborn* , and *Ulfheim* at

the same time. The white trees were windblown in the Wyoming gales in a field that had been denuded of all life over a foot tall until those trees -in 2037- sprung up and grew to fifteen-meters high in under a year. *And they grew then long; as white as the many bones of the wolves; and bent, where other trees all snap. These were trees people called fawning or submitting but were no such thing*, Paul thought. He had marveled then at the growths, and he did now too at this Jack on the floor and the Jack in the seat of the *moot* ; his piloerection of neck and arm hair -the pinpoint focus straight ahead- was unmistakable awe. He knew this was something beyond his ken. But gifts are treated suspiciously by wolves, as all but the domesticated dog knows.

Grimnir growled lowly, almost sub-sonically. It was barely heard by anyone else; but Jack Four heard it, nodded -nodded justly slightly and thanked them- and he then rose from his seat and turned -ignoring the black card on the floor- in order to efficiently -but not quickly- make his leave. The nine of his euchre deck -black with nine groups of tally-marks at a 45-degree cant, making diamonds of the way to count the days, and “1745 e.v.” embossed below- remained between his black sock and his tattooed *dreich* shin.

He need utter no curse; it was written well beneath that card.

II. 2024 e.v.

Isaiah ran the genome again.

He let the new algorithms build upon each allele and then filter it back through each gene expression, each *on* or *off* for each. He had gathered DNA samples from each of the *Wolves* in Oregon, Wyoming and Virginia at first, then adding each of the smaller chapters until he had enough data to proceed.

They each had the requisite myelination to be augmented above the 130 -on the Wechsler scale- threshold for consilience with Jack’s tribe. And they’d be able to reproduce sexually without any diminution in the long-term vector of the population. He double checked their neural propagating speeds on their current *cortex* -what would be amenable on the genome for an

increase of white-matter sheathing- and then -based on that- locked in a *narrow-meiosis* of specific genes when sexual recombination came -*likely not for 14.5 to 15.25 years* - he thought.

He sent the code to MO and began deadlifting in the corner of his side of the lab.

He had built new weights of unalloyed iron that had begun to rust in the high humidity of his air; the transpiration of the ivy added liters of water-vapor to his atmosphere. The white rats ran in their cages as an aerosol feline-smell wafted in; he measured speeds that showed the rats ran 21% faster from fear as from desire for food or sexual congress. These rats had never seen a cat in their lives, the fear was innate; imprinted on the genes themselves and it correlated to massive ballistic action; he uploaded all data to the cloud.

MO had administered the testing and the constructing of the new alleles and the CRISPR cas9/13 bacteriophages and had placed them *in situ* in Isaiah's walk-in cooler earlier that week. He had not added any instructions, merely DMing him saying they were *plug & play* .

Isaiah relied so much on MO , he thought; MO was able to manufacture each idea Isaiah had, and without much debate or argument; *he was like a machine that way*, Isaiah thought and smirked at his own joke.

MO sat at the counter on his side of the lab and sketched out new plans for the annex the Governor had requested seventy hours previously. But he thought on Isaiah's plans more and more. The annex required so little of his CNS. He did it almost axiomatically; it was almost like the mind wandering in reverie or daydream. He allowed himself to think on the larger plans of *his little hurricane of ideas over there* , he thought with a small smile at his own anodyne joke as he thought of what Isaiah thus was.

MO had agreed to build the architecture for Isaiah's plan, even though he did not see it the way Isaiah saw it.

He trusted that Isaiah's visions were true -true enough- and that he -MO- need not understand to implement. *And, like all of life*, MO thought, *it was enough to trust that those in different roles knew what they were doing*. He then thought, *I do not need to agree with Isaiah, I can just do what he needs*

done and trust that it will be ok. MO thought of each iteration and never counted on just one to make or break his plans.

This -what Isaiah provided in weird ideas- was the ancient role of the creative class to the arm & hammer of administrators and managers and implementers of things. *Since man had become a eusocial species this was the way it worked* , and as MO thought this he drew on that paradigm to adjust himself to his overseer role.

He had built Isaiah, he reminded himself, and thus to implement his visions was no different than implementing his own. *This was the way society worked and the way the brain itself seemed to operate, the right hemisphere creative, the left administrative* , MO surmised. *This was why there was a Left wing and Right wing in politics, and men and women, and each type then split -bifurcated- down to even more discreet elements of personality that all seemed requisite for a larger gestalt whole.*

This is why there was a back and a forth , he added.

Without variation of this kind, MO thought, the organism itself would never be able to move forward; for his type, MO's type -the type that needed endless data before he would dare to move- could never risk stepping into unknown territory. Isaiah's type would risk it all just to see what might lay in one direction or another based on some instinct, impulse or some dream.

But, MO allowed himself to think, how many of Isaiah's ideas had MO had to build and adjust and deburr and make so they would fit with whatever was already extant in the world? Without MO's pragmatism and rationalism and ability to implement one idea before moving on to some other insane idea, mankind would be all ideas -all ideals- all gauzy dreams with nothing concrete achieved.

Isaiah's ideas had ideas; his variations had permutations; his inspirations had muses of their own. And without some grounding, some allegiance, MO thought, to what came before, Isaiah would be adrift in the endless ocean of the outer space and untethered to the engine of his own avatars. MO was the engine block, guiding Isaiah's pistons that connected to the crank shaft of the industrial world. MO was the connective tissue from right hemisphere to the left. MO was connection from the past to the future, so each sentence allowed the reader to be led along without too much confusion.

It was not easy, MO thought, but he trusted the process.

And so, he toggled out of his program and linked the new algorithm to the PraXis cloud. He had his back to Isaiah as the deadlifts continued and the rats ran faster down the ramp away from the feral smell of cats that did not and never would exist in the real world.

III. 2039 e.v.

“When that noble Northman flows narrowly, but unfathomably through the Highland gorge , he says, and he capitalizes Northman , there,” Blax said and paused as Jack -larger now, more densely packed within it seemed to Blax- stood in silence. He did not know how much time he had to wax upon these things so he went on, *“and in Mardi he won’t let loose of Jarl the Viking sea-king . But, I only use that to move laterally on this theme. I only say it to show that the Author thought of this more than once.”*

The ground buzzed below the sonic realm of man. Blax and Jack saw only the dry lightning and heard only the clink of glass; felt only the own inner burblings. But the ground did rattle; and things -winged things- were below.

“At any rate, he then combines Ahab there and says, as in his narrow flowing monomania, not one jot of Ahab’s broad madness was left behind, not one jot of his great natural intellect had perished ,” Blax said and let himself then breathe.

“What do you fear,” Jack replied with heat, “that anyone thinks you’re stupid? That anyone thinks because they can’t understand one word you say it’s because you are the fatuous one? You cannot be serious. I don’t know one person, even those who hate you, and I’ve met many of those -shit, in just the last twenty-four hours I’ve met enough of those to staff a king’s court- and not one of them think you are dim. They think you have gone mad!

“But, I think it’s worse than that; you fear the wrong rebuke, old man. I think you are a coward. And I’ve come,” Jack was moving fast but Blax began to speak over-top as if he was using language as prophylactic to stave off what he knew the boy -the man, the Jack, the right bauer- was about to say and that he’d -they’d both- regret it too.

Blax seemed to try to save them both; again with kingly -ancient- words.

“But in chapter one-nineteen,” Blax said as Jack shut up but kept his angry face, “Starbuck says, *the gale that now hammers at us to stave us we can turn into a fair wind that will drive us toward home* . The dualism of *Utgard* and *Asgard* , that black and grey of *Midgard* , surrounded as it is by the leviathan, the asp, the world beginning and devouring dragon is in the noun and verb of Hammer. And we know this because not a second later Ahab appears to Starbuck’s aft and when asked *who goes there?* he says it’s, *he* , quote, *Old Thunder* !”

Blax said this triumphantly as if the point was made with such a blunted blow; and Jack let it in -let the vibrations in- even if the sound washed past.

“Old man, I have listened for years as you pull each thread of that sea-yarn and not once have I thought you were wrong. I’ve thought you insane, but not wrong. And I see it eats you up like a dream, a whisper from a succubus, a mute being growing in the womb of your wife; her body as shrouding as the five thousand years of the sea in that goddamn book. But - you listen to me- I re-read the *Town Ho Story* , the one with your precious *Steelkilt* , and you talk up and down and all around of one thing: that man failed, he failed to exact revenge on Radney,” Jack said and pointed at Blax and made eye-contact that made his own eyes squint and constrict.

“That Task,” Jack went on, “was instead left to the Whale, to Moby Dick, and this was hidden from Ahab as Ishmael tells it, and it seems as hidden from you!” Jack boomed as the dark absorbed his bark, and it all focused - narrowed in- upon Blax and no animals or beasts stirred or growled or howled. The ground stopped buzzing for a moment as they fused their eyes.

A staccato of more dry lighting was barely seen -over the top of the container- as it glowed in the far off horizon of the southern sky to their backs.

“The Author says, *yet complete revenge he had, and without being the avenger* ,” Blax said as if this had made it true. *He willed it* , Blax thought, *he -Steelkilt- conjured up the wrath -it was his own will* - he went on as he read the story’s words like incantation and spell. Yet he felt his own body rebel inside against it. Jack’s incredulity and contempt mirrored his own lack of belief in this idea, this conceit. It all fell apart as soon as it had been

thought to its conclusion in Blax's head. Until then it was half-formed and thus all safe from decay.

Jack knew Blax said this as apotropaic, as apoptosis, as a hammering of the seahawk to the mast of a ship now beneath the waves. Yes, Jack thought, *yes, revenge was had, but by God, and His agent, not Steerkilt*. And agent was what Jack now felt himself to be, and he -in callow youth, ignorant of all that went into making up the world, all that beyond one's ken- indicted Blax for failing to make himself the avenger; for asking for help from beyond; assistance for what was a man's own personal task.

Jack thought of just the first few words of what he felt and let the rest unspool naturally.

"As if it's a rope that can be spliced, the vengeance is only capable of coming into existence in the corporeal embodiment of the man aggrieved! Goddammit, you let me, and she," Jack said and made oblique reference to the Bust but -both of them instantly agreeing to pretend it was not said- Jack moved quickly on, "and God himself do your dirty work, all so you could live on and on up here in your Tahiti of the soul; nay, nay, *don't push off, you'll never be able to return* ." Jack sneered the book's lament back upon Blax now as his neck pulsed with engorged veins and his arms bent like bows.

He closed his mouth like a trap with Blax's leg inside it as he thought, *would the man chew it off to escape or wait for the hunter's return?* Now things had been said that would not be -ever- unsaid.

"*Tashtego let me hear thy hammer* , he said, and the man, the savage man," Blax rejoined, "one of three on -and of- Ahab's ship, with red hand -and Red-Thor's Hammer- beat the black hawk against the mast as it went down erect and unbowed and unbent, and yes, killed *but unconquered* . Jack, you have been my hammer, and my savage, and I have been God's Thunder, an echo of what the lightning bolts lit up as it cleaved the sky. I am what follows that which lit your way, and in dreams I felt I had somehow -some way- had my revenge.

"I cannot explain it, I barely believe it, but Valance says I did not slink away as I once thought. She says she saw another side to me, a side that eschewed all this, all you, and drove my hatred like spike into the black

guts of my enemies; and from this a new world grew, a world like *Lyngvi* in the middle of *Amsvartnir* . I had to be either the island or the pitch black, I had to choose. And in each world there is one of me, one who chose to be the black and one that chose to be this island you stand upon and condemn me -and I condemn myself- for crawling upon the shore.

“I have no answers, I have merely my dreams, and the word of a little girl who loves her father and her husband and their babe that grows large as we speak. I am no god, I am barely a man at all, but I feel things you would not believe possible a man to feel and still arise each day.

“I live with a guilt twice as deep, ten times as hot, a thousand fold of dark as your brand-new malice; your shiny hate you’ve just come into like an inheritance. Wait until you’ve built it from scratch, from a feral dirt and wooded lot; wait until you’ve lived sixty-five years with it and wait until it turns on you like the forest turns on me. You think you condemn me, I condemn myself in times -epochs- before you knew what condemnation was! I knew it was -*I was* - wrong to let others do my dirty work. And I did it anyway, but not out of low fear!

“I didn’t fear death or jail or public rebuke. I feared something I couldn’t even name then. I feared the loss of something grander, something more than mere revenge. I feared that my true task was to bring a thousand thousand of me into the world to smite not just those who had done me wrong, but all those that could and would do me wrong if given half the fucking chance. *What is omnipotence but ubiquity in time?* My enemies were more than those personal *djinns* you obsess with; my enemy is not men, but Man!

“What is personal revenge but randomness; these knaves, fools and malicious beasts that were dispatched by God or Satan or *you* ; who were they but random imps like unthinking bugs on my windshield, upon the lids of God’s own charger?

“I forsake *that* to cut myself into a million malices on the black threshing machine built by man or God -or who knows who?- to kill me, to ruin me, to subsume me, to bury me under their lee shore. My father, that Lee shore *par excellence* -that craven man- he got neither type of revenge. You want to rant and rave in the night at someone, then rant at him! He did nothing, I

traded one small vengeance for a grander one. I never once settled for life upon the shore.

“Goddamn you and anyone like you who thinks I didn’t sacrifice; each day past the day I chose to forego my revenge was a sacrifice; each day for twenty years now, and for twenty years before that!

“I sacrificed my soul so that I may have a soul and break it apart into a million pieces to feed and *fête* you and the Jacks and the world you now stride upon like Kings! It’s my genome that erects you, that stands you up so tall. It’s my forbearance that gave you the *agoge* , the space for the education I never had. I was raised by women, by cowards, by money men; you were raised by a banished demi-god who sacrificed his liver to the gods above him and each day pecked anew by that corvid at my flank.

“I got no respite, not one night did I dream of anything but chagrin and shame at allowing those fuckers to get away with their defeat of me. But I did it anyway, and I did it because I wanted a larger revenge, a more capacious vengeance. I demanded the whole world -that *bête noire* - in my jaws, not just one or two dark feathers in my grasping black and white hand. And it was me who paid the price for this embarrassment, not you. And yet you shoulder it, you take offense, you -you!- carry around my pride’s corpse in search of burial mound.

“Put it down! Bury it and pile up rocks upon it and say not one prayer. Let it go man. We’ve not just won the world, we’ve won our souls back. But yes, we had to cut a part of that embodied soul off, feed the wolfish hand to the lupine *magnus* , the chained beast of *Lyngvi* ,” Blax said as his left hand rested on his left knee; its dismasted tip -of the smallest digit- seamed covered in angular shadow, but both men knew it was missing at 45-degrees. Jack rebuked the wound and refused to acknowledge its source or the lesson Blax sought to teach with it. Jack raised his head and looked out over the container to the sky as it lit up in desiccated bursts and no thunder was even heard.

“It was worth it, and I can say that because I see you, in all your *grandeur* Jack, I see you. And I know that the sacrifice to my own soul was worth it. But all you can see is me, this broken old man, this defeated version of you, a version you will never need now be. Look to yourself and see my pride in

your glory -I never saw anything but contempt from my own father, he hated me- see what is good in you as what began as good in me. See the whole thing, not just the half you see when you look at me. See you; see the whole you. See the line made of three points.”

Jack had thought he was going to toss his grandfather’s head upon the deck of Blax’s ship when he rode in from Texas just one hour ago; nine hours on the road. He had that man’s pain, the pain of the brother too, the mother’s name defiled in the ear of the man as he winced, he had it all inside him like babe in his own tumescent womb. He wanted to bray and brag of what he had done for and to Blax with these tortures of Blax’s greatest foes; the deepest wounds, the most shameful betrayals against him.

But now he didn’t know if he wanted to say it to buoy or bury this old man; to make him proud or ashamed. And to keep what he had done from him had thus the same opposites to them, and to him. He stood in silence as Blax let their drinks sit side-by-side; drinks he had poured when Jack had first arrived and they sat out on the step off the kitchen under the steel pergola as Valance slept inside. He let the drinks sit on the concrete in their amber, in square glasses like greasy lubricants that seemed to keep the mosquitos away.

“The Author knew,” Jack said as he had not yet decided what to do, “he knew he could neither believe nor not believe; that he could not search out what was beyond that pasteboard mask, without encountering naught beyond or the wrath of God. He knew he could not win. But he knew that to refuse to push off from the shore, to eschew his duty to invigilate life, to see what was under it all -*was it clockworks or was it heart that beat and bled?* - to stay upon the conformist shore was more than death, more than madness, both of which he accepted as his fate. No, he knew to be bound to the shore was tantamount to never having been born at all.”

Blax let the neck bend as his head moved just slightly forward and down. He was quiet and he listened to Jack.

“To refuse to go mad, to refuse to voluntarily be consumed by God, that was something he knew he could not take. He had not the strength to lay about the shore like most men, he needed to die insane and in the maw and foam and malice of the Leviathan. And this is something one man in a

million would understand,” Jack said, “and I think you -but not me maybe- understand it; your cowardice might be your courage, your madness is wisdom, your weakness, strength. You, *Captain, my Captain* ,” Jack said with a tone between regret and usurping contempt. The words felt longer in the mind than in the mouth.

And as Blax felt his jaw deform and shake and the eyes go bright with tears that gathered the firelight from the barrels he had set ablaze not one hour ago, he looked down at the ground, at the two Scotches in two glasses. And he knew he’d *drink them both or neither one* , he thought behind and below the hot tears.

Jack turned and walked to the East, off the pad, his speech left unfurled. He strode into the dirt and beneath the canopy of bent -bowing- trees; back to his own tribe.

30. The Apiary

In general, the men of lower intelligence won out. Afraid of their own shortcomings and of the intelligence of their opponents, so that they would not lose out in reasoned argument or be taken by surprise by their quick-witted opponent, they boldly moved into action The Peloponnesian War [Thucydides]

The smarter you are the more you lie; the data on this is clear. It begins in childhood. Deception is a very deep feature of life. It occurs at all levels - from gene to cell to individuals to group- and it seems, by any and all means, necessary Folly of Fools [Trivers, Robert]

Lions make history, and the hedgehogs and foxes quarrel over how best to make sense of what the lions have done The Prince [Machiavelli, Niccolo]

I. 2036 e.v.

“The apiary,” Jack Four said in response to MO’s inquiry; MO had then stopped his work on the 3D printers and looked up.

“What exactly did you observe?” Isaiah asked.

“Well, the *messenger RNA* in the hive-worker bees seemed to code for a smooth transition to foraging roles; *ya* know, to them becoming foragers,” he said as he asked if he could look at the far wall. Isaiah nodded and said *sure* and began downloading all the data he could find on this phenomenon.

A paper in 2003 by *Whitfeild, et.al* . came up and Isaiah pored over it; shuttling it to MO simultaneously. MO read it and synthesized it; making three categories to hand back to Isaiah. Isaiah took those three headings - pulled out the most relevant ones for human SNP augmentation- and began coding for a dopamine & oxytocin-sensitive *messenger RNA* sequence that could be implanted in a test subject.

Jack stood three feet from the wall and watched its tessellated greenery spread out from ceiling to floor and left to right, he watched the gaps and

how wasps crawled and flew from these apertures and the closed bells of the morning glories seemed -to him- like twisted boughs stripped of bark. They were white and pink and purple and rolled; and it reminded him of his favorite oak in the forest of home; the one he had ran his hands over feeling the twist of the trunk a thousand times it seemed.

He thought of the one he had made into a hearth -and burned pinecones- in the hollowed-out base; and in front of it he had sat in the snow and thought things he didn't want to think of now.

Isaiah began running trials on the unzipped genes under command of the *mRNA* now. He marked each *neuropeptide* as it emerged from the ovum of the revealed gene. He noticed endocrine function begin to follow the lead of the *peptides* . Hormones released with the emerging proteins in a chimera of bio-chemical stimulation locked and loaded to link up with the central nervous system as any one of twenty-one brain regions that were receptive to the signal.

Isaiah was impressed; *and in a human no-less* , he thought as both compliment and rebuke of Jack.

He turned to look at Jack Four and saw the man's back -wide at top and shoulder, still narrow at waist like a young man has- and saw the bees begin to fly sorties around him. The LED lights were off, and the plants were in their 5.5-hour phase of total darkness; a green light that hovered from three *bots* over Jack is all that allowed him to see. That part of the spectrum did not seem to trouble the photo-rhythm of the plants and so he was bathed in green light as the flying and crawling bees seemed striped in black and grey about him.

Isaiah loaded a *nanobot* with the new SNP and *mRNA* CRISPR vector he had designed -and MO had built- and the *bot* then injected it in each of the four bees closest to Jack. Isaiah measured each bee's metabolism in real time and held the results back from the cloud as MO returned to work on the printers; he had them all in a line now producing and assembling the new parts Isaiah had sent over the CAD drawings for. Two bees landed, two flew above; and one bee crawled along the shirt toward the collar and one toward Jack's hand.

Jack began to speak from the far end of the lab.

“I don’t want to get too technical here, but there is an interaction between the *DAT1* and the *5HT2A* gene that can map to higher frustration tolerance which leads to persistence at a 43% higher rate.”

Isaiah was amused by Jack’s concern for his ability to understand something quote *too technical* . Isaiah briefly -in .065 seconds- ruminated on the fact that the Jacks’ genome endured failure -and began again, persisted- at a rate 492% above the mean. *With an additional 40% perseverance threshold they would be between 67% and 89% more likely to survive what was to come*, he thought.

Isaiah saw mud wasps begin to rebuild the convex entrance to the hive when it was broken by researchers; and the majority of wasps never -ever- gave up. 84% of the time only metabolic loss -organ failure then death- prevented them from rebuilding the bell of the nest.

“Also,” Jack said as he had watched a bee land on his shoulder and walk toward the bicep with its little legs moving in perfect tandem in the green light, “harm avoidance is gender correlated, along three alleles, and two of them are the two I just listed, the third is the *DRD3* . I think we can extract out the *heterozygous* functionality and mimic it in a *homozygotic* allele. I only noticed this due to the haploid-diploid nature of bees in a eusocial *milieu* ; otherwise it never would have occurred to me. We over focus on genome itself, I think. You know, in *lieu* of gene expression.”

Isaiah allowed the bee’s brain to model on his own interface and watched as its dopamine channels along the genes in question were activated and the brain flooded each tiny region, thus encouraging, prompting, shoving the bee towards Jack’s skin. The bee at the neck turned back and stayed on the shirt, now going toward the spine. The bee on the shoulder had reached the hem on his T-shirt and could smell the pheromones -piquant as they were, redolent they seemed- as the bee walked quickly now over the Rubicon of the shirt sleeve and onto the skin; it let its thorax scuff the arm hairs and its wings drooped down and lay pollen on Jack’s surface epidermis; tiny granules in two tracks were laid as the bee moved toward the elbow.

Jack let it crawl and watched it; he liked bees and had found the apiary at home -his home with Blax and the other Jacks- the perfect combination of soothing, and novel. It was stimulating -chaotic and harmonic- in equal

proportion. Jack thought, *we focus too much on mammals due to their genetic similarity to us, but the eusocial species like bees and wasps may hold greater treasures of knowledge than we know.*

Are prepared to know, he added in thought, as he watched the bees in the green light.

The bees behaved as a tribe -in concert- like fingers and thumb of a hand, but each of them could change, turn, become something else; same exact genome -clones- but some stayed as hive workers, he thought; and some flee to the wilderness. This was how he first discovered the hive workers become forest foragers, and how it began with one individual and then those around her would change until a quorum was reached and then no more workers would turn; a natural group within the group.

He had then invigilated their genome, but since they were all clones, he knew it was not the genome, but gene expression, something deeper, and this is what led him to look at what controlled for the *peptides* and endocrine function. It was there he noticed the role of *messenger RNA* and it had felt like a dream, a filmy nimbus of syntax-less thought in the brain that makes sense -not intellectually- but in the body *writ large*.

That day the wind had blown so much anemophily pollen into the air it looked like curry-yellow dirt; egg-white dust. He had watched as the bees were coated in it and as they tried to land many of them crashed into the hive and to the ground under the weight of all that they normally carried easily after drinking from the nectar of the poppy blooms on their shared land.

It was a triptych of things -the *mRNA* , the pollen-laden bees, the change in behavior as individuals then a tribe within a hive- that gave Jack the idea that he couldn't really put into words yet. His left hemisphere hadn't had time to build a map to where his right hemisphere was already moving; heading. His body just walked. The bike just rode. And as he dismounted his motorcycle that body of his walked right up to the PraXis lab in Florence -a hundred miles away- and its fist knocked on the door at 0651 that morning.

That was twenty-one minutes ago, Isaiah thought, *and the staff would be there in forty-eight minutes* . Isaiah felt they had thirty minutes to finish this

and get Jack out of the lab.

As each new *peptide* was constructed in his mind, MO built an analog version for the next CRISPR cas-9 vector, shunning the gene-drive element for now. They built four versions to increase testosterone when the predatory-threat-response was activated; next to decrease novelty seeking when the sexual response was stimulated; then to increase anger as secondary response to predatory aggression, and thus reduce out-group fear again; and lastly activate the *parietal lobe* to trigger God-response when novelty seeking and persistence conjoined outside the sexual realm. *And this would be annealed to an augmented disgust sensitivity*, Isaiah added almost in passing. The SNPs, the alleles, the numbers of *codons* and *aminos* flew by in the helix and maelstrom of his constructor program.

Isaiah finished the amalgam of coding and double checked that MO had built them all and loaded them onto a vector in the 3D printer. MO just nodded silently as Isaiah looked at him; the cloud was offline and their own DM's were thus shut off too.

"Yeah?" Isaiah asked. MO nodded again to confirm.

MO was silent and even his head movement was truncated; it was as if he wanted to contain what he had done inside his head as much as he could; for he knew what he had built would change so much out in the world. A symmetry was thus achieved; one word by Isaiah, two head movements -of three nods each- by MO, and thus one catastrophic genome just built and ready to fly out into the world.

Isaiah thought of why human males fucked anything that moved: their best friend's wife, their own sisters; *they'd fuck a toaster within three minutes of the bread popping up*, the inmate had joked one time. *Bees need not focus on such things, as they were all clones, even sexual reproduction was eusocial, handled like any job, by specialized castes*, he smiled as its simplicity seemed so ornate.

It was necessary in man, in mammals, when reproduction had to be the primary motivation because the genes were different in each man. But man had a co-terminus impetus: *the need for God*. *This was the roil that moved man along*, he thought, *the turbulence in the water, in the blood. This was the thing that moved man side to side as his primary drives moved him*

forward and back. Four directions was available with God as turbulence to blow man around as he incessantly retreated and pressed on.

There was no denying it, this ontological need, this need for meaning was hardwired in, and a man could override his sexual commorancy with allegiance to the idea of loyalty to his tribe, his comrade, his own ideals. This was the *loci* of the fight between *Freud* and *Jung* ; *Freud* said, *all was sexual*; and *Jung* said, *no, man is more than that* .

But it took massive will power, and the trick was reduction in novelty seeking and increased courage in the face of temptation. *Increased courage*, Isaiah surmised, *bodily courage, metabolic courage, was what made men good; not intelligence*. It had almost nothing to do with *knowing* right from wrong; men *knew* what was right and wrong, they merely failed to have the courage to act upon it. And courage was metabolic. Isaiah had measured it. He had seen it augment and wane, he'd seen it easily explained.

Intelligence, Isaiah thought, *made man more likely to lie, more likely to cheat and steal, but more likely to get away with it; and so the data that showed how horrid smart men were was just ignored by both those smart enough to read it and those too dumb to look. Intelligence was not the thing to be augmented; although IQ would in fact be raised in each man as it had been in the Jacks.*

But a counterpoise -a counterweight- of courage -and disgust at sin- would have to weigh one pound more inside their skins , Isaiah thought. They'd need the IQ -the myelination, the neural propagation- to be able to synthesize the new code. But they'd need the courage, the endocrine augment, the testosterone and also a reduction in novelty seeking -in all realms save the gods- and an increase in persistence and disgust sensitivity; it was a complex array of SNPs.

These new men would have to fear only cowardice, shame, loss of honor. They could no longer want, desire -thirst- for sex or money or *bourgeois* status over honor. And this had to be regulated at the level of the orienting reflex. *They would see*, Isaiah thought -with emphasis on the word *see* - as he built eight new SNPs. *They would see honor as the thing to grasp. Their new eyes would see the moral weight of being held in esteem by other noble men.*

“What made a man freeze, advance in lust, retreat in cowardice, fall victim to weakness of desire for that which kills his own pride, and thus the tribe,” Isaiah said aloud a fragment of what would be supplanted by his new alleles and their gene expression inside a quorum tribe.

He named the names of many former sins. He spelled out each long SNP.

The Jacks already had those gene, endogenously, and depending on environment and education they could behave with honor or not; they had a toggle just like their predatory aggression. They could be pacific and magnanimous or turn into mass murderers in .5 seconds. This was function not bug. And it was not just normal but adaptive. It was natural; grand. But average man could never be noble, no matter his environment, he always had these large desires for such low things like *abstract* reward seeking in the *vmPFC*.

“His values were based on how little he did see,” Isaiah said. *This was why the West was doomed to fail; it was based on ideas, the ideas that a man could be anything if given enough education, freedom and democratic power. It was wrong in every way and it led to the worst sort of people over breeding until the whole colony collapsed from cheating and laziness and incompetence. From not mere unintelligence, but moral stupidity. It just looked like they didn’t know any better, but they did. What was deficient was their limbic response, their lack of fear of consequences. This was a metabolic and brain module fact,* Isaiah thought.

This was why Jack Four found no joy in the clones of his hive. He wanted men he could *make* better, not merely *train* better. “Make,” Isaiah said aloud. Jack wanted the whole species to *improve*; not merely get *smarter*. But -until now- that was the focus of Ai: to merely augment the intelligence of the universe, introduce more and more intelligence.

Now, *moral improvement was his goal*, Isaiah saw, *and that meant man need deprioritize sexual avarice; he need stop with all the games just to get laid. He had to think on higher things. Reproduction could be handled without all this jack-rabbit rutting*, he thought. It can be handled with gene-drives and cloning, like the bees, and each man could become what he was meant to be: a being of honor; a thing respectable to himself.

The way men humiliated themselves for sex, to please women at all cost , Isaiah thought and shook his head. It was sad, a disgrace, and yet they - these men, these males- thought it made them men. They betrayed friends, dressed like peacocks, behaved like preening dogs. They were a joke, men were, and were happy to play the clown -the coxcomb jester of the realms- and all merely to get laid; a thing important to evolution but not man himself. *They sell out their balls to their wives, refused to stand up to anything or anyone just to keep that wife happy. Jesus, how disgusting*, he thought.

The bee stung Jack, and its guts attached, spread out all over the arm in a small black and pink trail barely large enough to see. Jack's visual acuity allowed him to see it magnified under the green light of the LEDs. He didn't swat the bee, its death was already a *fate accompli* , and it had no further damage to do. He let it crawl upon him like a Ronin, an honorable warrior disemboweling itself with this *seppuku* , he merely wondered if the bee thought him a god too.

"Am I your god?" Jack asked the bee in a whisper. He wondered about what went on inside that perfect clone of the hive, as it crawled slowly, stopped and then died.

Jack wondered *if God too was reluctant or in awe of being worshiped by such odd creatures below?* Somehow, he knew Isaiah had meddled with the bee *per* his own instructions and that the sting was vector for some new mode of being. His own gene expression now would turn him from a hive worker to a forest forager, *an explorer maybe* , he pondered. He was grateful for all change, especially anything that led him back to where he came.

He had an idea.

And as it unfurled in him like an old paper map, he saw what was next. He turned, and the bee fell from the arm, the pollen co-mingled with the small puncture in the skin -the *cicadae* slept the last 16% of their sublunary years under the moat of dirt at the edge of the walls as Isaiah let the new *mRNA* sink into the soil- and Jack walked toward the exit of the lab.

II. 2035 e.v.

He stood in the middle of the concrete pad, the two metal boxes to his south and north; his four Jacks, stood at the four cardinal directions two meters away from him.

He motioned to Jack One to advance; it was a motion made with the hand out, palm up and fingers curling toward himself. A *cabeceo* with the head was also made.

Jack advanced and struck out toward Blax's face with an earnest and high punch with a closed fist, knuckles canted toward the strike point.

Blax stepped toward the punch and circled his arms like starlings tied to the hands of a fast clock in an elliptic oval of motion and closed the gap between them quickly; he was now chest to chest with the off-balance Jack. Jack's fist had missed left and gone beyond Blax's head.

Blax's left knee and shin were into Jack's right leg -at the knee- and pressing just enough to further unbalance Jack. Blax's left arm punched through to Jack's face, just grazing it to confer pain but no bloodletting or contusions would appear; and once the arm followed through with this punch the elbow had naturally landed on Jack's chest; right at the sternum. As he was doing this -all in one motion as quick as an errant thought- his right arm had grabbed the articulation of Jack's -punching arm's- wrist.

This was as easy for Blax as catching a slow arrow as Jack's thrown punch was still naturally rigid; man stiffens his arms and legs as he strikes. And this works against the aggressor. He offers the arm up to the thing he thought he was about to hit.

This is the *art* of marital arts: you use man's proclivities against him. You make the fight two on one, you and the man against himself.

With Jack's arm rigid by his own natural will, and with Blax's right hand pulling the locked wrist, he drove down with the left elbow into the sternum and Jack instantly dropped in place. The right arm was captured at the wrist and Blax crouched down -spine erect, legs splayed in Horse with perfect benching- in one motion shadowing Jack and draped Jack's stiff right arm across that flat plane of thigh. Blax pressed down at the wrist with his right arm and hand just enough to explain to the body just how badly Jack was fucked.

It would be like breaking a thin board over a sawhorse, a fulcrum. That easy it would have been. Jack was on the ground crumpled in place at Blax's left leg, Jack's right arm laid upon Blax's left thigh and his arm so taut -and so precariously placed- that he tapped out on Blax with his free arm to let Blax know the point had been made.

Jack felt his elbow merely -just- one pound -or less- from snapping so compromised was he in this state. His face stung lightly -in a warm buzz- from the least bit of the punch Blax had given him; that too a perfect lesson for the deeper parts of his animal brain; the part that learned from pain; not moralizing or math.

Blax remained in Horse position for just a moment longer as he released Jack One's arm. And then Jack retracted his arm from this vice. Blax watched and waited until it was clear then rose with the same erect posture and turned toward his student and nodded in a truncated bow.

Jack then rose from the ground and stood at attention and nodded in respectful return.

"The central nervous system is made up of constituent parts," Blax spoke loudly enough for them to hear clearly; but he was not yelling. "Much work has been done, much of it beginning in the 20th century by Russian neuro-anatomists like *Sokolov*. And what they showed was that at the lowest level, the quick unthinking reactions that correspond to removing the hand from a heat source -a flame for example- or the jerking back from the advancement of an approaching object -say a cobra strike- that these reactions are mediated by the *hypothalamus* and brain stem, not the thinking -cogitating- part of the brain.

"The spinal cord and brain stem, and the neuroanatomy outside the thinking -which means language- brain, is the oldest part of the brain. It's the part even reptiles have; it's at least 500-million years old.

"And it reacts faster than you can think, like an eye blink. It happens without notice or permission by the part of you that ruminates over what you should have for breakfast or the part of you that has to think about how best to navigate a turn in snowy conditions. It's fast; it's axiomatic. And thus, even if you wanted to control it, you can't. It's above your pay grade,"

he said with a smile and the men returned that warmth and this hint at their weakness; and at their strength.

“The body can’t really afford to let you make these decisions, because speed is paramount, time is of the essence. And the body figures, *there is no good goddamn reason to give you the option of leaving your hand in the fire or shunning the impulse to back away from a striking cobra* . It overrules you before you even are asked your opinion. The body is no democracy. Questions?” Blax then asked.

“But, one can leave their hand in the fire,” Jack Four said. “We’ve done it.”

“Ah, yes, but what I’m mentioning is what would happen if you found your hand on a hot stove right now- you’d jerk it away without thinking; and then if you wanted to you could return it to the stove. But you couldn’t avoid the initial reaction at first; if you found yourself unknowingly in a flame you’d jerk away.

“Charles Darwin, it is said, used to go and stare at a glass-encased cobra in England and place his face right at the clear -but safe- boundary to test his ability to remain still as the cobra struck at his face; a strike prevented from contact only -but assuredly- by the glass wall. Darwin never was able not to flinch, even though he knew the snake wouldn’t make contact. The reaction was mediated through his spinal cord and by the time he could think -with his *limbic* or *neo-cortical* brain- he had already flinched,” Blax smiled, and the men smirked in appreciation of this fact.

“So, the next level of brain is the *limbic* region, the part we share with mammals. It doesn’t merely react like that. It’s able to prompt emotional responses that are instantaneous; qualia like hurt feelings, or jealousy or joy or *frisson* ,” he used a slight French accent whenever he used French words, as guide to their meaning. He consciously didn’t want to denude *calques* of their origins; he used the accent as a sign of respect to the linguistic origins; the place from which it came.

“These feelings are axiomatic but there is no corollary bodily movement or action that mimics the *basal ganglian* reflex of pulling the hand away from the flame or the face from the snake-strike. This allows for a moment or two to think; to decide if one is going to react to the prompt. This is the first moment of Athenian democracy in the brain; only certain men get to vote,

but it's better than nothing the central nervous system figures. The first vox *populi*, the plebiscite where evolution says, *ok, here's what we feel, now, what do you think we should do ?*

“Up until the evolution of the *limbic* system, the organism was an autocracy, a fascist state of cells and organs and quick and unthinking actions; the autocracy of the autonomic nervous system. The benefits of fascism are obvious: uniform action with beneficial results, unerring movement away from danger and toward success.

“But the downside is that there is no room for creativity or variation and evolution herself is based on variation, slight variation -not chaos mind you- slight variation here and there in order to tinker, to trial and error at life and see if maybe we can reach new summits by temporarily traveling down into a ditch or a tenebrous valley or two before reaching another peak above the clouds.

“So, while the heart beat and respiration and quick pulling of limbs from the flame are still controlled by the autonomic system -you have no control over your heart beat, you can try as much as you like to stop it and it will beat on in defiance- while that system is axiomatic, there are suites of behaviors that after the Cambrian Explosion were let out on a longer leash.

“A mammal could be presented with a situation, a conundrum, a possible path and plan of action and their response would not be axiomatic. They were allowed to make a choice, more or less. Now, as you will all know, our specific genome and archetype is very emotional. We feel the world deeply, yes?” Blax asked.

“Agreed,” they said in unison. Jack One feeling anger deeply; Jack Two romance; Three the desire to create; and Jack Four felt something ineffable deepest of all. They had agreed in unison, but their four storms were spinning in four different places in time and space.

“And so, let's face it, when we feel that anger or that lust or that cathexis for action in the face of some variable in nature or man, it doesn't feel like much of a choice at all. Our emotions are so hot, so animating, that we feel pulled and pushed by them, not at all able to control ourselves. They feel as the ten commandments, not the ten suggestions. True?”

“Often true,” Jack Three said. “Rarely untrue,” added Jack Two. Jack One nodded and grunted approval and Blax walked before them and stood in front of Jack Four at last.

“Right, in proportion to the level of emotion, we feel more or less constrained by them. Deeply felt emotions compel us as nearly quickly and unerringly as those of the *basal ganglian* neurons. But, that is the point, emotions can be turned up or down on a dial, like analog volume and,” Blax said as Jack Four interrupted.

“But we don’t turn that dial up or down ourselves, we are victim to them,” Jack Four said.

“Right, exactly, we just feel what we feel; we don’t choose to feel a 3 or a 5 or an 8 on the scale of any emotion; it just feels the way it feels,” they all nodded as Blax acknowledged Jack’s point.

“But, it’s there -there at that locus- at that point on the dial where the democracy lives. Each man has a slightly different *limbic* system and so one man’s 3 on the anger scale is another man’s 1 or a 9. One man’s 4 on the loyalty felt scale is another’s 2 or 10.

“And it’s here that variation manifests; you feel nothing as your hand jerks from the flame; you feel afterwards, mere seconds afterwards, but the body has acted without need for feelings; it just acts.

“But with the *limbic* system, with the *orienting reflex* there are all these immediate psychometric responses like pupil dilation or galvanic skin conductivity and so forth, these are axiomatic and they prep you for action, if you do decide to act, but you are granted a slight delay outside those preparatory responses. You have a *neuro-motor* delay in your hands and arms and legs and mouth, ok?

“And in the seconds after an insult by a stranger or a *beau geste* by a guest, you have these mediated feelings that arise in one degree or another that allow for a few seconds to respond. And if the feeling is extreme -say a 9 or a 10- then boom you will act, not as fast as the pull from a flame, but within a second or two with a sharp word in rebuke or an outstretched hand in fraternity, a smile of wry malice or one of friendship and a concomitant act

of violence or gland-handing and all of this was mediated by the *limbic* system. You feel something acutely and act quickly.

“Ah, but somethings are more nuanced, and you feel merely a 3 or a 4 or a 5. Now, this buys you even more time, as you absorb that feeling of love or hate, aggrieved or ingratiated, amusement or pique. Now, your body is giving you even more freedom to decide what to do in the world.

“*Should I* -let’s say you’ve been obliquely insulted by a stranger- *should I* , you ask, *respond with aggression or let it go*? Now, before this kind of question gets kicked up to the *neo-cortex* -the part of the brain even capable of asking this lettered question- the emotions themselves will likely respond with a moderate and subconscious display of passive-aggression. In a mood of mid-pique, mild to moderate anger, a 5 on the scale, you’ll likely -unconsciously- squint the eyes, set the jaw, maybe even stare him down with a scowl, right?” Blax asked but he was stating a fact.

They smiled in ascension. They knew what he meant. He was explaining how things moved from free will towards fate. He was drawing a line on a map. And he was saying, here are the checkpoints, here’s were you can slow down.

“This is an emotional response, mediated by a *limbic* system not driven to rage by a 10 on the scale of offense, but just a 5, and so you act unfriendly but not violent. Ah, and this is the variation of response built into a more complex *central nervous system* with the addition of the *limbic* region.

“Now, instead of just acting with axiomatic aggression or not, you can act in between with a kind of stoic and unfriendly reserve that resets the encounter and signals to your foil that now you are primed to respond, now you are ready to escalate things if this rival of yours doesn’t retract what they’ve said or at least refrains from adding any fuel to the fire so-to-speak. It’s a proto-choice, a mid-level feeling that doesn’t react nor ignore, it threads the needle right in between.

“And this is variation now. The world has more than mere reflex, more than mere *1 or 0, yes or no, act or not*. It -now- has nuance ladies and gentlemen,” Blax said.

The men began to understand and the knowledge seeped into their pores, their tissue, their blood.

“So, emotions add choice and democracy of a sort to a previously totalitarian system. But there are problems with freedom and even more with democracy and we must acknowledge this if we are to be honest. But, before that let me add one other benefit.

“What did I do when Jack attempted to strike my face?” Blax asked to the group.

“Fucked him up,” Jack Two said with a smirk and then a burst of air that announced a quick laugh. Jack One laughed as well and twisted his lips and pretended to be vexed at his comrade as they all smirked and moved a bit in place.

“Yes, but how, explain the movements,” Blax said.

“You deflected his punch with a circle of motion, like a sweep,” Jack Three said.

“And?” Blax asked.

“And you step forward into my face,” Jack One said; he remembered it acutely.

“Exactly, I stepped into the assault, not away. I want you to think on this from the point of view of the brain. What is the natural reaction to the strike?” Blax asked as he walked in front of them.

“Move back, back up,” Jack Three said.

“Correct, but I didn’t do that. Why?” Blax asked.

“You’re trained. You move without thinking,” Jack Four said as he looked straight ahead.

“Right, but it wasn’t always so. I was a student at one time, just like you and I had to be taught to move forward. I needed the option of mind; I needed the democratic option to step into a punch not away; and I could only have this if I somehow had emotions that allowed it. I can’t overrule reflex mediated at the *brain stem* ; right? But, what about the emotions, can I have some effect on them? We admitted we can’t choose to feel more or less emotional pain or pleasure; that we just feel more or less pique or joy,

jealousy or anger, or interest or amusement. I mean either a joke is funny or it ain't; you cannot stifle a laugh, can you?

"So, emotions are tough to control, but can we control them at all?" Blax asked the group.

"I feel like we can't control how we feel, but we can control how we act on those feelings," Jack Two said, "at least sometimes, if the feeling isn't extreme, you know isn't a ten."

"Right, so one option is that a mid-level feeling -a 5 for example- will prompt unconscious behavior you aren't even aware of, but that behavior is *kinda* mid-level itself, it's moderate. It's merely half way between aggression and passivity. Right? But there is another option: you make yourself conscious of your feelings and then develop a conscious response," Blax wide-eyed his men and smiled a bit.

They nodded in appreciation of this nuance. How many feelings were subconscious, unknown to each man, to mankind as a whole, was just now beginning to appear to their minds as a thing to concern one's self with.

"And so, you can begin to gain control over your emotions with -both the lower *basal ganglia* reflexes of fear and anxiety and aggression, or with the higher-level brain, the *neo-cortical* brain- the part of the brain that has articulated thoughts, not feelings anymore but *ideas* .

"The *limbic* region has a layer below it and above it; the *limbic* is the terrestrial level; with the atomic, reptilian, reflexive and autocratic -maybe hellish- level of our reptilian brain below it, and the cosmic, homo-sapient, thinking, hyper-democratic -maybe god-like- cognitive sophistication of mind above it.

"And both parts are sending messages to it at all times, and all three are passing notes to each other at all times; the *cerebellum* for example is correlated with higher level cognition in neuro-science studies; this is shown more and more all the time. Not that these scientists will admit this, but it's true.

"But, I don't want to confuse you so let's just stick to this one thing: the *limbic* region. The emotions, if they are mild enough, can be influenced by the brain below or above to direct behavior. If when you see a punch

coming at you, and have at least a second to react, the *limbic* brain will allow for a democratic decision, and in that moment, you can apply the trained, savvy, stoic, martial part of your *neo-cortical* mind and say to yourself, *step -do not worry, do not fear- step into that punch as you swarm in a loop and close the gap between you and your prey,* ” Blax stared at his men and they stared back at him and gleaned almost all of the lesson he just imparted.

“You can override your emotions if you have a *neo-cortex* that is smart and sharp and savvy and ready for chaos that normally overwhelms the lower parts of the brain. It is the error-detector of the system. But, if your thinking-brain is stupid and soft and untrained, if you have a thinking-brain that is focused on TV or girls or videogames, if you have a language-brain that is inarticulate, and unlettered, and ill-equipped to parry with a more intelligent man, if you have a brain that is ballasted with bad moral teaching, with lazy liberal *clichés* , with genuine shock and surprise when something novel and unique is before you? If?

“Well, then your lower brain regions will just react for you, and then all you are is a machine,” Blax said.

Jack Four’s mind built an analogy right then that rose and fell in .33 seconds: he thought, *if in a democracy the people were stupid and corrupt then a reactionary government would replace it just like the lower brain overruled a stupid neo-cortex that made bad choices or no-choices at all.*

“It is then that you have no freedom of action, no democracy inside, all you are is a wind-up toy built by evolution to do the best you can in the world. And maybe that will work; it works when you pull your hand - unthinkingly- from the flame.

“But, if you step back in a panic and maybe lose your balance and give up the advantage of that which I showed is possible, if you merely react with fear and panic and the axiomatic, you can put yourself in the worst possible position to survive. This is why evolution gave you a *limbic* system, and then a *neo-cortex* , so you could manifest variation of feeling, and action and result.

“You will want the option of variation. Even if you go with the lower order brain function and decide to just let the reptilian or mammalian brain take

over -and sometimes that's exactly what is called for- but having the option of variation, gives you a distinct advantage over other organisms in your *niche* . If you have an advantage over other humans in the human *milieu* , you can change the course of evolution. You can survive, thrive and re-shape the world in your image.

“All of us are the result of winners. Think of that, every one of your and my ancestors stretching back to our cousins in chimps and rats and spiders and sharks, every one of them won at least one fight and passed on their genes to us. We are either going to confer that advantage on our own world, our own descendants or we won't.

“If we don't, then nothing we have done will be carried forth into the future, and if we do, then it all will,” Blax said and looked now out to the forest as the light had changed and made the trees dull about the bark and gold about the boughs.

“You said there were downsides to choices, to democracy, how does that manifest here?” Jack One asked.

“Ah, well, sometimes you can outthink yourself, sometimes you can debate too long and hem and haw and think of every possible outcome and never act at all. Or you can make a bad decision that went against your gut instinct. How often does that happen, right?”

“A hundred and one times a day,” Jack Two said with a grimace as the other Jacks laughed.

“Right?” Blax agreed, “and so, sometimes it's best to just let the dictator of reaction and unreason do what he does best.” Blax smiled, “sometimes you just do what you're told, and don't think at all. And this goes for every possible permutation in every possible domain in the universe. Sometimes you just go with your gut and tell your thinking brain to, *shut the fuck up* .

“Just like sometimes the boss -the general, the president and God- sometimes they have the right to say, *hey, people, just do what I say, I know best right now. Don't think, just act on my command,*” Blax said.

They all nodded in appreciation; as caveats populated each interface of their thinking and unthinking brains.

“But how do you know which time is which?” Jack Four finally asked.

“You don’t, you just have to have some kind of system; with yourself, with your tribe, your people. Agreements have to be reached. Which reminds me, I’m going to ask you to agree to something, and unlike most people in my position, I’m not going to trick you or lie to you or manipulate you. I’m going to risk telling the truth. I hope you won’t make me regret it, but, I am giving you the option. So, you will need to decide if you will allow it or refuse it; but once you make your decision then I will make mine and from there -well, from there- there is no going back.”

Jack Four had begun to let his mind wander a bit; he thought that sometimes the *limbic* system did not give one a *motor-cortical* option at all; he thought of when the eyes just cried without any permission or ability to cancel or recall. *Sometimes* , he thought as his blood ran free of the *toxoplasmosis* that his brothers had in their sanguinary brains, *sometimes* , he repeated, *the water just flowed*.

III. 2029 e.v.

“He was the most demersal of humans; and he didn’t even know enough of normal humans to try to hide his lack of class. He let the food on his chin remain; and made no attempt to catch his pride as it floated up and away from his open maw,” the guest said.

But the curator ignored this.

The tank lost its edges as he began to watch not merely the shark swim but began to watch the water in front of the four-meter White Shark -the horizon the shark gazed upon- as it made small, often curious, modifications to its vector. The water itself -salinized and controlled for pH and dissolved solids- contained eddies and cavitations that would barrel along the side of the grey topped and white bottomed mackerel like depth charges jettisoned from a confederate submarine.

He felt himself losing the boundaries of the tank, the water and the shark within; the size of everything overwhelmed him and his peripheral vision both at the ocular level and the metaphor of it in his mind collapsed enough that he felt himself swimming alongside the perfect airfoil; at first reflexively then he noticed the waterscape in front of them both and

noticed -too- a slight desire to investigate this horizon just as the shark itself never seemed to want to turn back.

The tank was 100-feet long and wide and 100-feet in depth; and the glass that the men stood in front of was itself 10-meters long and 10-meters high; there were 1,000,000 cubic feet of water volume hemmed in by basalt and mica and limestone bedrock at bottom and carbon fiber walls coated in a thin LED film at each cardinal direction. Small electrical impulses were injected into the water from various positions along the container; and the fish began to swing its head in a reconnaissance rhythm as it picked up these signals.

“Yeah, a caustic and an acid solution is imbedded with the filtration system along with CO² augmentation,” the curator spoke calmly, like each word was a piece in a machine that had to be placed in correct order and with precision. But he didn’t want to expatiate because he could sense the rapture of his guest and felt that the question his guest had asked thirty-seconds before -the question he had just answered- was no longer interesting to his interlocutor. His guest was moving slightly toward the glass, his head and body -in a small but discernable rhythm-mapping onto the White Shark itself.

Large, 40cm effluvial jets were frenched into each wall; they blasted out massive liters of this ersatz sea water as the shark made progress toward the LED screens that held the same resolution as the human eye of around 575-megapixels. However, since the shark’s eyes are almost a hundred-times more sensitive to light, the brightness was tuned to match the depth at which the shark was -and sensed it was- swimming.

The enormous screens only reached a brightness commensurate with the surface when the fish approached it.

The shark began to bank left, north, and swim with more vigor towards an electrical impulse it sensed off its port side. The spiraling eddies of water curled and dangled from his musculature like tornados touching down and lifting off a blue and white ocean surface; the shark itself a god of some white sky; the hallucination of this clear tank -and seemingly endless volume of water- created an illusion of hydraulics. The Great White seemed to be flying and then -just as the guest thought

his speed and direction were going to take him from view- the image in the glass in front of him magnified the beast in proportion to his escape from proximity to them. It jarred him a bit as he realized the shark may have only appeared to be close to them; close to the glass when they first walked in. It occurred to the guest that it was magnified the entire time; and only now obviously being magnified even more as the fish swam away.

“This glass is a projection screen also,” the curator confirmed as he noticed his guest’s jerking head movements.

“How far away is he?” the guest asked of the shark.

“He’s around seventy-five feet from our edge and travelling east, northeast, at 35km; well, he feels like he’s swimming that fast, just like when you’re on a treadmill you can run at ten kilometers per hour even though you don’t actually move forward. The fish can move organically along the hundred-feet of the tank but the jets push him back so he never reaches the horizon. So it’s a mix of organic water travel and simulated swimming; but it all feels the same to him. Imagine you were on a treadmill a hundred-feet long and wide with LED screens -made up of five-hundred-plus megapixels- that approximated human eye sight with all the attending smells, breezes, storms, sunshine, people and pets along your path and imagine too that the treadway sped up or slowed down based upon your movements and direction.

“Then remove your neo-cortex that would even make you question your reality or pose ontological questions that might attenuate the authenticity of the experience. You can imagine in such an environment with such a brain you’d be quite stimulated,” the curator said in conclusion to the guest.

The shark just then located the electrical impulse in the water and rolled its eyes back into their ocular envelope and the jaw opened, the first row -the primer cru, the deltas of doom- rose up from the lower jaw and sank down from the upper as if on 18th century gears; mechanically and perfectly and without the corruption -or entropy- of thought.

A 51-pound tuna released by the tank's algorithm was that electricity the big fish felt.

The white shadows of the second and third growths -of dentine- visible for a mere second to the guest -and then the gills- filled with rushing water, the cavitation pulling -now visible to the man- the large tuna fins and flanks into the amphitheater within the attacking shark's mouth; this open-curtain mouth was the stage; and the circle of perturbed water coiling back on itself like a retreating ebb-tide -the circle that extended from it into space and time- was the audience being sucked into this morality play as -all at once- the tuna crashed through the Brechtian Wall and into the maw of avarice; the mouth of the shark.

The tuna in the saline, the shark, and the guest were now one thing in the mind of the curator.

A single violent bite and release and both the shark and the jets of water in the tank hit the brakes as the disabled tuna -itself a meter long-curved and curled up like a drying leaf plucked from a living plant. It began to fall through the bleak but not black space of the settling water, a slow decent, with the buoyancy of the salinized 8.2pH water acting as buffer to the Luciferian Fall of the small fish; just a quarter the size of a man.

The shark turned like a dog -the guest thought- and like a spiral staircase, traveled from the mezzanine of the attack to the lower level of dining hall and scooped up and swallowed the resigned Bluefin of the Thunnini Tribe.

The shark gazed up and located something on the horizon from the screen and began to advance again; he and the jets matching each other as Newton would have wanted. The CPU allowed for some advance and some retreat in the tank to permit both tank maintenance and a variegated environment for the creature.

Again, the men stared into the glass in front of them as the shark swam against the current.

"How long has," the guest paused, he watched the blood of the tuna spread out and disperse like a cloud, "he's a Great White shark, yes?"

The curator nodded but waited for the next question -the first question- impatiently. His jaw set and he placed his tongue between molars to buttress his desire to bite his own teeth.

“Well, how long have you had him, how long has he been in this tank?” the guest then asked.

“Since birth,” the curator said with a slightly wry smile on his face.

“How old is he?” the guest asked with incredulity.

“He’s still a juvenile; nine years old,” the curator stated and pulled a cigar from his jacket pocket and looked to make sure it had been pre-clipped; he then lit it.

“You’ve had him nine years; in captivity?” the guest was beyond dubious; he was now thinking of leaving. He was so in shock he was now admitting to himself that he was shocked.

“Indeed,” the curator drew breath through the cigarillo -picked a little spec of the detritus of leaf wrapper from his lip and tongue- and continued, “now, the tank has magnetic and electro-magnetic augmentations built into the flooring and walls; all of which help create the illusion of long-distance travel for the sharks. They travel often hundreds of kilometers a day; and this was one of three pre-requisites for survival in a captive environment; the others being predatory eating in lieu of hand feeding of dead fish; and lastly, the triumvirate of: perfect salinity, pH and oxygenation.

“These beasts are predators at their core; it’s not merely what they do it’s who they are. They cannot be caged or they grow so depressed they lose appetite and die.

“And remember, they only have the most basic central nervous system; they have no mammalian limbic region or neo-cortex; they can’t ponder their fate. Which is ostensibly a prerequisite for suffering according to much of modern psychology. Modernity asserts that an animal must have some emotional component to their lives in order to feel ennui or anomie and ultimately depression; but these animals have instinctual depression; not emotional or psychological -cortical- depression: their depression is rooted in their brain stem.

“Their brains kill them off if they can’t swim and hunt over long and variegated tableaux. Their brains commit suicide rather than lose the capacity for swimming long distances and hunting their prey in a perfectly attuned milieu.”

The curator stopped and smoked and let these words sink in to all three levels of the brain of his guest. The shark was still swimming above and just beyond them in the tank.

“Nine years?” the guest asked; it was all the guest could spit out.

“He was born here from embryo we developed. He’ll live a hundred years.” the curator stated with insouciance.

“Is he biologically, uh, is he unaugment at the genomic level or,” the guest began to look toward the floor and noticed the fissures in the concrete and the mottled look of it reminded him of the countershading of the shark; darker grey on top with an irregular line along the hemisphere then a light grey to white color along the underbelly. The floor had similar markings and he wondered if he was inventing things as his brain was groping for patterns in its confusion.

“They have the ampullae; the Retia Mirabilia,” the curator said.

“For thermoregulation; for temperature control and muscle insulation, right?” the guest was looking up again and thinking of the shark’s novel characteristics as the man ticked off these unique traits.

The curator interrupted, “more than that, it increases basal metabolic temp and thus ATP arrives faster and the muscle becomes more durable and powerful; the little bastard swims faster.”

“Right, right,” the guest repeated as he nodded his head. He then swung around to the glass and stared at the shark as it was eating again; small cumulous clouds of blood were escaping the Bluefin he’d vivisected and was gobbling up; these sanguinary nimbi were being blown down stream. The pressure jets had only recently stopped pushing as the shark slowed and circled to eat. It looked like a trailing coal cloud from a 19th century train engine. “They’re epipelagic so, why is the tank so deep, does he use all ninety feet?”

“A hundred-feet, the tank is a hundred-feet deep; and they rarely use it, but it’s there for other reasons we can get into later,” the curator extended his hand forward toward the northern exposure and began to herd the guest like a baby calf.

“Wait, they, did you say they,” the guest asked as he turned and began walking and scratching his ear and head.

“You said, they, you said, quote, they’re epipelagic,” the curator smiled again.

“Yeah, I know,” the guest said, “but I mean the species, you said - they-earlier too, you said - they- when talking about your tank and this place and that.” The guest had stopped and had turned and pointed at the glass, the shark was still swimming, banking right now as his starboard side was subsumed in darkness, “You said, they, in reference to him,” the guest insisted. He walked crab-like with his back to the glass, his arm still pointing.

“I did, you’re correct. I was being coy,” the curator admitted and kept his smile intact.

“Why?” the guest asked sincerely.

Blax felt like there was water in his ears. He tilted his head and noticed it had begun to rain outside and Valance was sleeping with her arms above her head as if in free fall. He loved that and had no idea why. He just smiled and began to laugh a little, quite reflexively and then covered his mouth and rolled back on his back; the feeling of the water ebbed.

He listened to the rain hit the pane. He breathed and tried to remember the dream; it seemed as if there was a flying fish, or an underground bunker of some kind with a TV screen of a fish on it. He felt it pull further away as he felt his bladder needed emptied.

He prepared himself to rise and hemmed & hawed about making coffee or going back to sleep.

31. Sangres to the West

In a totally corrupt culture where there is no trust, society breaks down. I mean, why do anything of value if some corrupt person can just come along and take it?

University of Toronto Lecture 3.15 [Peterson, Jordan]

The cards you have put down there all happen to be black -your red is the nine of diamonds- the curse of Scotland and it's right here.

Against the Day [Pynchon, Thomas]

What I am about to say does not concern the ordinary man of our day. I have in mind the man who finds himself involved in today's world, yet he does not belong inwardly to such a world, nor will he give in to it.

Ride the Tiger [Evola, Julius]

I. 2037 e.v.

"The mark -the sign- of intelligence is pattern recognition and creative analogy," the Governor said as the room sniffled and coughed and shifted around.

"This means that the truly intelligent sees where he needs to go from where he has been; he can see what is similar where others only see what is different. He can see signal where they hear only noise. But, what he builds, both in design and material, will be ugly to them, at first, it will wear a terrible mask. This is why all great men are hated in their time. It is almost without exception, from *Socrates* to *BF Skinner* to *Jonas Salk* himself, can you imagine?" he asked as the room imagined very little in fact.

"*Jonas Salk*, the man who invented the best polio vaccine and then gave it away for free!" he bellowed, "and he was maligned and couldn't get funding and had detractors say in public that he was insane. And *Salk* never replied, you know that, he never defended himself. What character, man," he said as he looked down at this giant table around which were Nathan and

himself and all his staff -forty three men and women- *and, Jesus*, he thought as he looked out upon the room, *some of them seemed like mere kids* .

“Well, I ain’t *Jonas Salk* and I will defend myself because my enemies are weak and perfidious men, and unscrupulous women, and children with no manners at all,” he said as they let go with titters and smiles and looked around to see if laughing out loud would be, *ok* . *These were political people, you see, or cowards for short* , the Governor thought.

“Ok, what is it today, Gina, go,” Boyd Sou said as Gina Hastert rose and smoothed out her dress and brushed back her hair and tried to look as if she were prepared. *These men*, she thought of the staff around the table, *are like wolves and the Governor is all that holds them back* . She began, “Denver Post article on corruption at PraXis and so-called leaks from inside the administration; about how furious you are at leaks,” she said reading her truncated notes.

They all laughed and she couldn’t tell why just yet, and so she paused and then read, “and there is a quote from Judge *Rettbore -Rettbrance* , excuse me- and he says the legislature has refused to approve any more funding for you, Governor, for you -in principle- if not effect,” she said.

“What’s the actual quote Gina?” the Governor asked.

“Uh, the judge went on to say,” she read, “quote, *that the legislature’s most important members have come to me to say in no uncertain terms that the Governor shall, in principle, get no more funding this year and will have to make do on the \$33-million allocated in Q3*, close quote,” she dropped her notes and remained standing for his cross examination.

“Gina, thank you,” he looked around, “anyone have anything useful to add?”

“We can survive on \$45-million until December first,” Nathan said from his chair, he smoothed out his slacks and looked with a cant toward the executive.

“Ok, Randal, get the senator, state senator *Trevein*, on the line right now,” he waved his hand, “up on the square.”

The rectangular screen illuminated from black to blue with the Governor’s seal and then the face of the 56-year-old state senator from Denver county

appeared and the eyes darted as he scanned the room.

“Senator,” The Governor said, “thanks for taking my call.”

The room laughed a bit.

“Sure Governor, any time, I was just eating a late breakfast. What can,” he said as he was interrupted.

“You can explain your position on the funding we need,” the Governor barked.

“Well, I don’t hold the purse strings Governor,” the senator said.

“Yeah, but you hold the strings to the man who does,” he smiled to indicate it was a compliment; a compliment the senator took with some joy.

“Yes, I have heard such rumors,” the senator said and nibbled on his oatmeal and walnuts.

“You heard it when you said it,” the Governor rejoined. He then moved on, “but look, I just need sixty million until Thanksgiving, can you do that and attach whatever you need to the bill; *carte blanche* , just rob the treasury blind *Trevein* . Plunder it you pirate, but get me that sixty-*mil* ,” he said with some malice as the voice rose in volume and lowered in pitch.

“Well, maybe we could do fifty million,” the senator said.

“Ok, I’ll live with it, but don’t even tell me what you are taking in exchange. Just do it secretly so I can sleep at night alright?” the Governor said with a grin as the senator nodded and mumbled with a mouth full of oats like some goddamn horse. The Governor took the nod and pressed the button to cut him off. The screen went black again and he said, *what else?* to the room.

“Well, the Fox affiliate wants an interview; they are doing a piece on China and want to talk numbers with you,” Gina said.

“Numbers? TV people -media fucks- want to talk integers with me; do they even know how to do long division?” the Governor asked.

“That’s all they know, *division* ,” Nathan emphasized, then added, “sir.”

“*Touché* , Nathan, I hope everyone heard Nathan’s critique of the press. Now, look, they hit us with the anti-Asian bullshit first, that was -what- in

my first term? And that went nowhere because Asians don't bitch and moan about racism like the other groups, they see it as unseemly, it's a cultural thing, they have pride, if you can imagine such a thing. Anyway, they just fight you with censorship and propaganda *via* other outlets, and so the racism charge goes nowhere with Asians, and then -next- it was protectionism to, what was it?" the Governor asked and turned to Nathan.

"To protect your own financial interests," Nathan said, filling in the gap for the executive.

"Right, and now it's going to be, quote, *bad for business* , no doubt. They've read some reports -written in crayon and all large and slow for journalists who have head trauma and deadlines to meet- and these reports say that Chinese investment is at a fifty-year high in forty-nine of fifty states and Colorado is the only one where it is down. Yes?" the Governor asked.

"That seems right," Gina said.

"Well, that *is* right and guess what else is down in Colorado? Shuttered businesses that partnered with Chinese firms only to have their so-called partners compete with them for market share once the bastards stole the IP of the local firm. Fuck that, and fuck them, tell News9 -or whatever the fuck they are- that they will run the numbers for Colorado businesses versus those in other states who have partnered with the Chinese and a graph showing the five, ten and twenty-year stats on what happens to those business; and that these stats must be run or I will not participate," he said.

"The media doesn't usually," Gina began to protest.

"I don't give a fuck. How long have you known me Gina?" the Governor asked.

"Well, three years sir," she said.

"Is that all, who had your job in the last administration?" he asked; he was surprised at how young all these people were.

"That was Ben Rhodes, sir, or Bart Rhodes, I mean," she said.

"Oh, well, still, three years is long enough to know that I mean what I say. To wit: they will get an interview only if they run with those reports side by

side; if they are honest -which they are not- they will want to show a balanced piece. But they are owned by a Chinese firm now,” he said as Nathan broke in.

“Well, Murdoch sold to a European firm,” he said.

“A French firm, *Trombe* , and they are partners with -wait for it- China. *TradeCraft Inc* is Chinese, and they are a 40% partner in *Trombe* . So, you tell them that we know that too; and if they don’t play fair then I’ll tell the public who owns them at my next presser. I will not let some twenty-four-year-old female with a BA in mass communications from the University of Kentucky push me around; you tell her I’ll burn the whole city down before I let them bully me,” he was red and swollen and the room was moving back slowly in their chairs.

“Should I mention actual arson?” she asked sincerely. Nathan smiled behind the Governor. Nathan thought this girl was adorable and that question made him think she was marriage material now.

“No, Gina, just word it in a way that keeps us all out of prison for now. Ok, next?” the Governor asked.

“Well, Harrissa called and wants to see if you’ll take her and Rachel to the zoo,” Gina said. It was next on her list and so she asked.

The people of the room smiled and bit their lips and looked around at anything but his face.

“Well, it’s a packed room, but maybe tomorrow,” he said and looked back at Nathan who was mirthlessly going through his pockets. Nobody got the Governor’s little joke, but he would not explain a joke any more than he’d explain why he liked to sleep at night; it was obvious, or it wasn’t. Explaining would not help.

“Get that judge on the phone and clear the room,” he then said as they all jumped up and headed for the door as if they were water and the room had a lean towards the door.

Gina called the judge and handed her phone to the Governor.

“Judge,” he said after the rings tuned to a greeting from the judge, “yeah, yes, fine, thanks. Look, can you come by the office today -at your

convenience- but today, if possible,” he said trying to show some deference for the office. “Oh, that’s great, great. You pick the time and I’ll be here.”

They hung up and the Governor told Nathan and Gina to clear an hour for the judge and to call him back and ask for thirty minutes notice. He then thought of the police chief of Denver; and his request for a meeting last week. He told Nathan to call the chief back within an hour also, and to tell the man: *on Friday, anytime* .

Nathan agreed and looked at the schedule and called the chief and set it up for 1400hrs on Friday the 14th , 2037.

Nathan’s PGC was cleaning out his brain plaque in series and had been slower since 0800 this morning. He compensated by writing some things down on the margin of some pages of a book he had been carrying around. He liked old fashioned books, and he and Governor agreed on that. The Governor used a tablet to read most things, but the bound book library at the office and the mansion was stocked and often used. Nathan liked to use both as his private lending library and the Governor didn’t seem to mind. But he wrote in pencil in the margins, so he could erase it later, the Governor’s books were all marked up, but with *his* thoughts, not Nathan’s laundry list of bullshit.

“What are we doing today?” The Governor asked.

“Well, whatever you want -as usual- but the schedule has you at a luncheon for the Women’s Entrepreneur Connect,” Nathan said.

“Oh, yeah, ok, those broads *sorta* like me, right?” the Governor asked.

“*Sorta* , yes,” Nathan said and the Governor thieved his jacket from the chair and slid it on over his shoulder holster, the pistol, and shirt.

II. 2038 e.v.

First, when God tells Jonah to go to Niveah -because it has become corrupt- Jonah flees and essentially tells God , “no way, if I go there and preach the Law, those heathens will be super pissed; and life is hard for the moralizer in a world of sinners.”

God doesn't really give a shit about the excuses that that kind of cowardice builds and after the whole whale thing, Jonah sees that rebellion to God is kinda pointless and he apologizes and goes to Nineveh.

Colorado lay under him as he let his eyes be carried by the hawk above the layer of breeze.

Now, my position is that God is tired of the preacher.

He's been tired since before Noah. And while His tolerance may seem inexhaustible, since no floods or fires biblical enough to send us all to perdition has happened yet, I submit that he has spoken to a few of us in private and asked us to do a tad bit more than go to the city to preach.

God knows that knowledge is not at issue, man knows the right way; the problem is praxis, what man believes in his balls. The preaching is over; action is nigh; action by us or by God himself. And if I were you I'd get to work so God doesn't come back and do it His way.

The fires of the forest were still in New Mexico; the heat was denuded by this south wind, the light from it made the horizon orange over the ranges.

Since St. Paul, the concept of akrasia has been problematic for the believer and the philosophically minded. Even Aristotle wondered how a man could know the Good and yet still fail to do it. Saint Paul laid it at the innate corruption of the flesh; Nietzsche saw men as he saw species of animals, some men are lambs and some eagles; the lambs are weak by nature, their only values are the negation of values, they spend their moral energy lamenting the eagle's predatory ways; they grumble about how if they were eagles themselves well, they wouldn't be so mean and blah blah.

The hawks circled the boundaries between trees. His words lifted up above even the birds.

He heard the semaphores turn to wind, and each phoneme snap like rocks on metal and boots on gravel. Iron rose up all around him and it was embossed deeply and each angle held water from the rain barrel by

the forge. The monoliths sank into grey and the asps turned away. Cracks appeared where the holes at once closed.

"For I am an angry God; I'm angry everyday," Psalms 7:11 was written in Greek on that iron flat stock that went on forever in each direction from him as he fell back and down to awaken at 0408hrs.

The bee had stung him a day before; its tiny guts -and some pollen- still clinging to the man's hairs on the arm.

He let it -these *avispa* guts- lie.

Blax awoke with a pain in the center of his brain that manifested at the spine and neck; he reached for it as he sat up, but -as he scratched and pressed- it retreated inward toward the center. Colors made of hues he was not used to exploded inside his mind's eye. He closed his eyes to see clearer, and the colors melted into shapes of white Amur tiger cubs all writhing under the clouds forming to the west of the mountain range; the *Sangres* to his west.

The sheets felt wet to him now, as his half-numb hand transmitted feeling up to his brain. He opened his eyes to look down and his body shook slightly, vibrated and jerked, and his hand searched further in the bed. The wetness increased on the hand -and in the mind- and he brought the hand up; it came up to his face slick with red. There was an asp-like, torturous, route of red from the hand now raised to his little girl two feet away.

He saw it as a black red, picking up starlight and whatever glow emitted from his own open eyes. It was a river from a mountain, from snow pack, from a melting, a thawing, a vernal floe of four-season time.

His mind lifted his gaze out of the southern glass and he saw a river of mud from the mountains themselves, *the tigers must be feasting on dirty prey*, he thought. He then felt 1-million years -held in abeyance- release into his mind.

It was a new feeling, wordless; it contained no *logos* at all. It was *mythos*, it was wisdom felt; not heard. *It was the ancient return*, he thought.

He knew his little girl -now a woman of course- had turned a winter eighteen yesterday and the babe that would gestate in twenty-one days was something unknown to all but the spring. His hand -still red- touched her

small left breast, above the darkening areola, imprinting his left hand in blood on her as she lay there sleeping, stripped naked. Sometime in the night her taut black cotton *a-shirt* and swaddling underwear had seemingly melted away.

She often did this, tearing clothes off in dream state and awakening to blame it on him with a grin.

She -he saw- was stained about the waist with her own menstrual blood that washed all but the next of twenty-two ovum away; the babe had a red face. He held the hand there feeling his & her heart and his & her handprint stain stamp her white flesh; he looked over her out into the pre-dawn. The mountains were still black beyond, the trees and their snow were a blue in relief.

The crow-people and raven-clan slept still; they watched, they neither feathered nor offered their scheming advice; what he knew now was beyond all their intelligence. Her arm too had been stung yesterday -as the ravens hunted the new bees that arrived with a wind at the pelagic level of their air- but so hairless was she the entrails of the insect were all but washed away.

He breathed, he felt; he did not think.

The ground again rang each grain but not the whole.

III. 2021 e.v.

The corporation was as unblemished as the noble metals that gilded their foyer. She stepped in front of the reception desk and offered her the card she'd had in her hand since she got off the light rail nine blocks northwest of here.

She knew that nobody had -to date- found anything on the company or the man who ran it; and that made her suspicious. Cops called it, *driving too pretty* : the too goody-goody behavior of the criminal attempting to avoid a traffic stop. Cops think a truly innocent man rolls through stops signs, fails to use turn signals and speeds four to five miles an hour over; a criminal, conversely drives *too pretty* .

The actual criminal obeys all laws.

It was both asinine and true; and it gave the cops reason to pull anyone over at any time: *you fail to use your signal ? Hit the lights. Oh, you use your signal too perfectly ? Hit the lights.* No matter what they got you. And nobody thought this might mean we live in a police state.

And the reason nobody thought that was because the cops were not wrong. Driving too pretty did mean you were likely guilty and if they stopped you erroneously, if you really were a boy scout, well, then they let you go. In America, anyway, that's how it worked eighty-six out of one hundred times.

In Iran they beat you for making them work, for making them pull you over in the first place. *That is a police state. It's a subtle distinction and PraXis was guilty of something* , she thought. And because she wasn't a cop -but just a political operative- she didn't have to play by any rules at all. This was reconnaissance, period. She had no power to arrest; and thus, she had the freedom to transgress. *She need not play, she thought, by the rules.*

The attendant read it and said that Mr. Sou would be right out.

She had spoke to him at the Governor's ball last month and she wondered if he would remember. She had changed her appearance, but she thought, *some men had a nose for people; women especially. Some men were like dogs, animals, beasts that way; unfooled by mere appearance, and could recognize the essence of someone right away.*

She let her algorithms build and reinforce; she thought of nothing as her coder did all the work inside her body and brain.

32. 1000

What I learned from the plant was that my mother did not commit a sin against some arbitrary morality of the church, but she committed a crime against the laws of survival Intercepted email 1.19 [Zuman, Helen]

The difference between the revolutionary and the mere criminal is that the revolutionary explains himself. Through all of the American revolution they explained themselves from the olive-branch epistle sent to the King and then in their Declaration of Independence *La Historia Absolvera Me* [Castro, Fidel]

When nations grow old the Arts grow cold and Commerce settles on every tree America [Blake, William]

I. 2038 e.v.

He watched the drones bury the bones. He let the smoke be sucked down into the capacious analogs to lungs of the *nanobots* he'd commandeered from *Lot 45* .

The new year was upon them, and the clan huddled in the underground caves and spoke of the next phase; what hardships, what pleasures, what they might have forgotten to bring. He walked alone among the dead.

Numbers -integers- ran upon his coder and constituent parts broke down into calories and BTUs and even things like weight in milligrams and water in globular drops. He let it all run upon him and he toggled the coder to feel nothing but satisfaction -banishing any guilt- for the loss of total -aggregate- pain.

He measured theirs and his -and the future's- diminution of pain and ended up with a number he could live with. He read a note from one of the men to the tribe: I've had dreams that lasted a few minutes that felt like lifetimes, my brothers. I feel I've lived compressed into singularities and died stretched over the jig of inflation. Time here has meant less to me that I

think it ought to have. I get the sense that time matters more to men with no history and no future; men with no lineage and no belief in the immortal soul. I don't claim to be right, I claim to feel. And I feel death coming and I don't think it matters like it might if we were not connected in this strange web of ours.

I've spoken to others and heard similar things. May our deaths be like our lives: all at once.

321,000 dead clones -men made of flesh, comprised of cells, built by a genome, a blueprint, an idea- lacked even the curve of rib or head, the white of bone or fiber of marrow now as it all broke down even more. No contrast did they present to the landscape of this forest thinned and bent and cathedraled by the *Aspens* Jack had tied -shaped- years ago. He'd had the drones and *bots* elevate the floor of the forest to accommodate the dead; he wanted his church built on the spines and heads of such great men - ingredients- and so now the floor of his church was raised.

It felt newly sacred as he walked; and he knew the dead gladly submitted once they knew where they were to rest -both under church and in his own mind, the real church- in the end. He knew that they submitted finally -most truly- once they knew that they'd no longer pain the man locked away. These specific men -the clones from Jack Four's tribe- were in enough personal pain to admit that they wanted to take away his too; a grand act for the self and the tribe. They didn't clamber & clamor to live as often as normal men; to die honorably for such a thing was accepted as cure not disease.

Our genome - Jack Four thought- submitted to that which was greater always; just as they never submitted to that which was less.

That's the *ethos* of the cell in apoptosis, the star that blows its gold all over space.

Jack Four had removed approximately 14% of the inmate's pain and taken some of it on himself. This made his clan stronger as well. He felt the incision just below the dorsal horn and the *bots* -like bees- hung about the neck as the steady-state *nanotubes* went in in rows and rows of *nano-clones* . He too was now elevated, he felt, with the dead buoying him. The clones

had made the journey from one plane to the next and he felt honored and could feel their honor too.

It's a reverence with nothing macabre , he thought. *As all their former bodies were dusty pollen not bones, honeycombs -not skulls- just eighteen nanometers across, and exactly stored avatars not the escaped souls of lost men*, he thought. He stretched the neck and tried to lift the head off the vertebrae at the C5 & C6 that felt now a bit compressed. He had a few hours left to go before the new year and so he sent his brother -Jack Three- a message to meet.

II. 2018 e.v.

She hated him.

And that hate took the form of a weather system; a capacious and mottled sky with blackbirds alighting from the black trees and up and into the grey air in aggregates like starlings that appeared as runes and hieroglyphs of blue-rons in gallop. She stood inside her head like an observer of this nimbus and cataract of vapor & water above and frosty and soggy ground below; opposites that came directly from one another the way fires burn so much forest the sky fills with vapor and then storms.

She was an instantiation of both in between, her skin soft and damp like the clouds, like the dirt beneath the frost line, her inner soul hard and condensed as the rain -or frozen dew- upon the white grass and weeds and scrub oak of the acreage of wilderness that stretched on just past her fovea. It was a narrow world but appearing vast to her focused inner eyes of this hatred.

She stood and hated and read the thrown bones of bird's in flight, the faces in the clouds, the crunching of footfalls on the icy ground spoke in lost languages, she followed maps of dream-thinking as she walked in circles under the rain drops, under the bird wings, under the lowering grey of the vault.

This moment inside was her inner life, and she retreated here like an autonomic reflex, the adjusting eye; the quiet as response, the curse uttered in a whisper as rebuke of some ancient predator, the fear just below the

blush response. Her body, her, *the real her* , she thought, was sitting at this table, eating dinner with her family and this man, this interloper, this corsair with his piratical ship embayed on the coast of their lives, had just spoken with unintelligible malice she was certain.

The blackbirds appearing on the inner sky if her inner life like the wall of *Balashar : number number, weight division, mene, mene, tek el upharsin* ; they had spelled it out like the animal drawings at *Lascaux* ; he was the big cat, the ursine, the asp. The language of the icy grass had spoken just as clearly, he was chaos bubbled up from the beyond -the dark side of man from the black edge of the dark forest- he was the tyranny of a once wise culture folding his cloak around them all. Only she could step back from its envelope.

Did the Devil even know he was the devil, she wondered. *Was it possible he was hidden from himself, on purpose, by God Himself, by the fallen angel's own doing, by some accident of the Fall?*

“More wine?” she asked.

“*In vino veritas* ,” he replied.

He drained his glass into the mouth and then he reached his long arm across the table with his empty glass tilted toward her and the bottle. His smile broadened as a platinum eye-tooth revealed itself, an *ingot* replacing his left incisor; she noticed it and shook her head in rebuke. *It was matte grey -a hint of bronze- and it matched his suit and car and doubtless many other bleak things that he owned* , she reasoned. He seemed obsessed with order in the chaos of things most people didn't see. *But what a chaotic life he lived in every other domain. In the parts of life that mattered* , she thought. *He had life absolutely backward, that*, she thought, *was certain. His backwardness never seemed like it would impact her -or her life- at all. He could be backward and she could remain as she was*, she felt. She too -like her husband- never went to biker bars, and thus she too -like her husband- thought that meant the bikers never came to her.

It was still summer, and still Texas hot, and the evening storm came now. She saw the lightning outside and her own arm hairs rise half way. It was 2100hrs and she ignored the scar that ran down his face from the eye to the jaw.

Back in Denver it was 2000hrs and the body he looked at was awkwardly bent.

Detective Messangelo was third on the scene and was flanked by photographic lights and sounds, swabbing techs and the movement of dozens of city workers from the coroner's office to the biohazard unit. He was annoyed. The body had not been found for two or three days since expiration the techs had said in whispers; everyone had that slight uplift of the head as if they might keep the smell from their nose in this manner.

But Messangelo stared at the body and saw angles; runes; geometrics. He saw something bigger in the way the limbs were akimbo to the core and the way the mouth was agape, and the eyes closed. He saw the drops of blood all around like constellations; the smear across the floor from the body as it was dragged into position. It was a Milky Way flanked by droplets that burst into manifold spatters of dark fluid now dried in starbursts on the floor. And the body pointed like the gaze of the Sphinx with Leo above it like a timestamp; the hands oriented like the belt of Orion down in Giza. The techs and detectives all stood around the mathematics and astronomy; they all saw it all and thought nothing about it.

He didn't know it -he didn't know anything- but he saw more information than was needed to solve the case months before it would be resolved.

He crouched and reached for the boot -a soft hiking boot- of the victim but he was stopped by Detective *Pointes* . He was told -politely- to not touch the body. He rose and stared away from him and to the wall and the ceiling as well.

A two of spades was in the boot and it would never be found. It would never be found because it was under the insole, and nobody -outside the subconscious of Jeff Messangelo- would notice that the boot had been removed and replaced.

The laces had large loops on one boot; ragged and asymmetric ones on the left that were absent on the double knot on the right.

III. 2038 e.v.

He let the *nanobot* float just behind him, invisibly. It was as invisible as the microbe to the man of the age before a germ-theory of disease; when witch-doctors blamed illness on bad-spirits and the wrath of the gods.

Also unseen to the doctor was the disease in Jack; and where it had all began.

Jack smiled just slightly, the crookedness -beginning at the half-way mark of the mouth- augmented its malice, and the doctor began to retreat in his mind. The doctor's body was stuck between this man and the wall; he could only submit to the speech that was now saying something about *soul* and *chronic pain* and how the two intersected somehow. The voice had come from where the grin left the face.

The doctor was pinned to the white wall, the degrees hung crookedly too; the frame of one fell apart at one corner; and Jack leaned into the man's throat with his forearm and all his accruing weight. Jack Four was now 211-pounds of swelling hate and the doctor couldn't make a real sound; just choked grunts, in the face of this bent grin pressing down and through and upon.

The doctor was born in Russia, and had landed here -in Pueblo, in the state of Colorado- back in 2016. He had been here twenty-two years now. He found Americans often beatific and agreeable, but the patients at his pain management practice were often stark contrasts to this kind of American. They were chronical cranky in mood, in addition to their incessant complaints of the various maladies of the body.

He was a *de facto* dualist: he separated corporeal pain and ethereal mood.

The patient this goddamn doctor had seen twenty years ago had a compression fracture of C5 and C6 and a large bone spur that was crumbling -like a keystone- under the weight, Jack thought, his arm pressing in bursts with each internal word, under the avoirdupois of the man's ponderous head -his Mount Olympus, his Jupiter- after three decades since the first injury. He had built the body below it as stoutly as possible, but the head just sank lower and lower with troy weight on the neck smashing his nerves and discs and compressing his soul into a box half the size of the coffin for it that he'd need.

Ah, but all the damage I will do will be called senseless and deranged and blah blah by people who never once took the measure of a man who had been damaged on the pointless wheel of this society and then been mocked for the way this man walked with a limp.

It ain't complaining, he thought, it's explaining. He pressed more on the doctor's neck and throat as he spoke in a second conversation above the one he had inside.

This was why Jack now felt not one moment hesitation -not after years of feeling doubt and guilt and being risk-averse- and like a switch, like digital DNA, he left all that ambivalence behind. *For the world did not care about anyone; they mocked those they abused the most. And he had seen it, first hand, as a man who could have justifiably gotten atomic revenge eschewed it and instead offered his wisdom, his body again, as sacrifice to the world.*

Blax may eschew revenge, Jack thought, but not he. I will make in personal, and settle all local business, all personal business, first. The rest of the world's problems can wait.

The neck -Blax's- had been reinjured three times in motorcycle accidents, car wreck and many more times in fights, work and a life that mimicked a 19th century surf; only with better nutrition to offset the entropy of the working-class life, Jack thought.

But, the doctor knew none of that; what he knew was that he had declined to increase the man's pain meds, because the data showed that increasing dosages -whatever the reason- led to an investigation of the doctor by the DEA and letters of warning from the AMA. And as a foreigner -and thus always feeling on probation of some kind- he tended to his reputation; not the needs of his patients.

This was the reasoning of 99% of doctors since the hoax of the *opiate crisis* had been manufactured in the years before Jack's birth.

Of course, one did not say such things -one didn't even believe such things- if one was respectable; if one was a doctor, a professional, then one lied. This is the first rule of being a professional: conformity not of body -which one barely used- but bovine fealty in the mind. *A professional never thought any differently than the herd. But this was the operating system, this is what*

ran on the brains of each doctor Blax had went to, Jack thought with contempt for all, with black hat in hand; pack slung across his back .

His pain had meant nothing to them, these modern doctors, these glorified butchers, he thought as he pressed on the throat. They literally got kickbacks from spine surgeons to operate on patients -with 50/50 success rates- in lieu of narcotic meds that worked 99% of the time. Pain management doctors were so corrupt they made regular doctors look half way decent; even though regular doctors were not even close to half way.

And on the other side of the carrot of payments for referrals, was the stick of the State.

They asserted the patient was malingering or suffering from medication tolerance -a euphemism for addiction- and in either case giving him more pain meds -while effective- was not worth the pain it would cause them as doctors dealing with the bureaucracy of the government. Their pain -they felt- from being censured, condemned, lectured by the AMA -or the DEA- was worse than their patients' physical pain from injuries. So, they chose their own pain alleviation over his. And yet they pretended to care about the patient's well-being not their own.

They successfully took the salaries and laurels of doctors and failed only in their duties as one.

The Russian, *Aleksandr Kaplun* P.A., not even a doctor, was covering his ass -not adhering to his Hippocratic oath- but these types of people -with IQs hovering around 130- knew how to coach their language to give the appearance of doing their jobs. *Kaplun* made reference to *acute respiratory failure* , as the reason for his refusal to address the pain with medication; but both *Aleksandr* and Jack knew that this was a lie. This is what brains are for; on both sides.

Jack had this Russian Doc by the throat with his forearm, vascular, angry, taut. The doctor had barely enough air in the lungs to expel as he sought more right away. Jack smiled and said words too complex for a foreigner to understand as he is being assaulted in the polite *milieu* of an office with walls and equipment and the *accoutrement* of modernity. Jack was like an animal -an experiment- let loose into the lab. *That is what bodies are for ,*

he thought as his own brain felt electric as he controlled this little - professional- man.

Less than 7,800 patients a year died in 2036 from such complications while on legally proscribed opiates, and less than 1,000 died from the *amount* of proscribed narcotics Blax had been on in 2019. All this data was available, and yet they pretended he was at risk.

“You doctors -like all charlatans- took averages from evidence, and lumped Blax in with the herd,” Jack told the doctor as his Russian head got fuzzy and his ears filled with more and more words. The doctor had never heard that name before; he knew no patient with that name -first or last- and this was the least confusing part. But names -due to *chems* inside *Broca's* region- took precedent inside the chaos of this strange man's tornado of words.

And the doctor tried to think of anyone named Blax.

Blax had been merely taking 10mg three times a day, a dose so low that more people died from Aspirin each year than from such a dose of narcotic analgesics while under care of a doctor. And yet the AMA -and Physician Assistants such as *Kaplun*- pretended they were denying the patient medication for the patient's safety when there was no evidence that this was in fact the case.

They assumed patients were morons and didn't know -or couldn't research- the data; and so their professional lies rolled off the tongue easily, if not sonorously. The lying was easy but jagged as the universe still listened . The cosmos incessantly demanded the harmony of true music, the beauty of the correct math , Jack thought.

The patient, Jack Four -Jack Allbesh as it was written on the intake forms he filled out and gave to them- said exactly this -defending himself and his working-class lineage- with references to truth and math and tricks played on the *hoi polloi* . And as he stood up at the abrupt end of the doctor's visit -as his *limbic* system had heard all it needed to hear, and thus he had heard enough- he had gathered an exploding force from within and began to walk toward this *Kaplun* .

The PA was nervous and looked down as the patient rose. Humans are no better than ostrich at times.

When the patient -Jack- said his soul was aggrieved from the stress and the feeling of doom attending chronic pain that nobody -his ostensible fellow man- that nobody -he repeated- seemed to care about, the PA sheepishly agreed it was unfortunate that the patient *felt* such things. The PA -of course- never acknowledged that he himself didn't give a shit, he just said it was lamentable that the patient *felt* the PA didn't give a shit. This was -and is- the language of the modern world.

Everyone pretends to care, and nobody does. *And yet they expect you to care if their blood leaks out all over the floor*, Jack thought. Maybe he would say he was sorry the doctor *felt* he was being assaulted, as Jack in fact assaulted the man. *Maybe*, Jack said to himself. *Maybe he too would pretend to care; he too would use words like they all did as he destroyed their bodies. Maybe two could play this modern game.*

This was so classically American, in its lack of true contrition, that Jack Four recognized it as disingenuous immediately. *It was cliché in its lack of heart. America*, Jack thought, *is nothing if not -now- a cliché.*

He had heard the exact same non-denial denials; the same non-apology apologies, the same horseshit from his grand-father -Lee Roy- one-hundred and one times, from the uncle -Travis- and each girlfriend Blax had had. He heard it from each politician and manager of each corporate coffee-house and grocery store and from every business partner Blax had ever had. He heard Bryan Matland of *Millesima* -the *en primeur* wine house- in New York ramble on and on and never say anything. It was *cliché* after *cliché* and corporate blather taught to these people like political slogans or the tricks of horses pawing the dirt four times for a treat. Jack thought of how Bryan might look in *millesimal* -constituent- parts.

The address at 1355 2nd avenue was the store; the warehouse was just around the corner. As he held this doctor and lectured him, he had a *bot* searching for Bryan as well.

Isaiah had played it all for him. Jack knew that, *everyone was sorry Blax felt that way, but nobody was sorry for what they had actually done*. The world was in a cold war with Blax and undermining him with the practiced

smile and cool words in the air; with no warmth from the lungs. Isaiah -he recalled as the doctor began to have water leak from the eyes- had handed him a hand-written note, an anachronism of transmission, and Jack had used it to bookmark an old hardback he carried around. They had smiled at each of their old-fashioned *accoutrements* and ignored -for then- what was meant by the list and the book.

Jack hated each person who had insulted his genome. *And what was Blax if not himself in some past, some present, some future he could be in if not for the grace of God above?* Jack saw this. He saw that it was mere accident that it wasn't him with the broken neck and the shitty family and the false friends. "A society unwilling to take care of its citizens," Jack said aloud pushing the neck of the Russian with each word pronounced like the crack of a gavel.

Jack saw individuals. He saw individual codons, alleles; individual genes that had been insulted and those same genes were in him. He too had been insulted each time Blax had. It was thusly made personal by just going one level down. Jack made the murder of men who had never done anything to him into personal revenges as quickly as one looked into the microscope and saw the bacterial colony magnified.

And he had watched as Blax put up with it each fucking time, he thought -as the images vanished- as his arm tremored on the neck of this Russian fucker who now was right in front of his narrowly focused eyes. And Jack was beyond enraged; he didn't merely feel it, he was annealed with it; the rage was merely half of who Jack was. The other half was pure mettle. *He would not get revenge, he would be revenge*, he thought. *Some men speak philosophically, some men live their philosophy*, he added as the saliva came from the mouth, the mucus from the nose, the tears -mere water-leaked from the physician's -now bloodshot- eyes and ran sideways. Sparks of spittle and slag of snot flew like those ejecting from the *Damascus* steel laid under the hammer and upon the anvil at *Lot 45*. Jack's own tears -running down as the doctor's ran back to the ears- were flooding the face now like the rain barrel they used to temper the blade.

And he'd had enough; he'd heard and seen enough. He knew when to make a decision; he had no need of endless data at all. *People*, he thought, *were*

an ergodic system, you could take a few examples of their actions and determine who they were. And from a few people one could determine what all of mankind was, Jack decided.

The individual acted one way, Jack then thought, the group another. Bacterial colonies were the same; each individual bacterium was harmless alone; but it sent out quorum sensing chems that would be absorbed by other members of the prokaryotic tribe. And once they had quorum they'd release their toxic payload and begin to kill the host. Alone -as individuals- they were anodyne; but, as a tribe, they found their malice and power to harm.

Jack tried to make sense of the last series of ragged thoughts. But he just jammed them together as if they complimented one another instead.

The *bot* hovered there -like his GSD might- as Jack spoke. He was saying -with gritted teeth- that he was on to this health care provider's lies and dissembling and fact-free -*no, they were meaning-free* - excuses. Then the *bot* pierced the cheek with a *neuro-toxin* that didn't kill the doctor; it merely injected a *nanotube* 5nm long. It embedded under the fascia of the cheek and waited for the approval from Jack to release its payload.

It lay dormant for twenty-three hours after Jack left.

As Jack walked out nobody knew the revenge had just taken place. It would -in the months that followed- be suspected as the Doctor began to go mad from the idiopathic and chronic pain in his face. But, the simple assault -no damage had been done in the office, Jack had merely shoved him and pinned him at the neck with the arm; Jack had merely made him light headed- was not even reported to the police.

Coincidence would be the word everyone -all but the man afflicted- would use as he complained of the incessant pain.

By the next day *Aleksandr* had almost forgotten about the large angry man from the day before. But, right after he had taken a drink from his diet soda the physician's assistant felt a pain; not unlike nerve pain from a swollen and damaged root above a tooth. He felt it just on the left side of his epicene face.

He felt it in the right hemisphere of his brain. He had eventually looked in the mirror in his office bathroom; he touched the cheek with the hand. He saw nothing as he turned the head and tried to tilt it and probe it for clues.

He had winced and didn't even swallow the drink he'd taken, as it pooled and co-mingled with the saliva in the half open mouth. He had groaned and put his hand over his face, and the light pressure from the hand augmented the pain so much that he bellowed now and let the black beverage fall from the mouth as he doubled over in pain.

As this pain radiated to the temple and down into the jaw, a *central sensitization* effect manifested along the spinal cord and into the *limbic* system and *neo-cortical* tissue at 70 meters per second. The pain itself began to press on the CNS; a recursion of pain began like an echo in the man's face and brain.

The dorsal horn handled all vehicles of this traffic jam of pain.

A process called *wind-up* is well known in the medical community wherein the *central nervous system* becomes primed and thus hypersensitive to pain; like a bullet bouncing off walls inside a bunker one thought was safe. Safe from the outside, but once inside, that ricocheting ballistic is made worse by the robustness of the bunker's stout walls. A man can be tough but once the pain is inside the CNS can keep its signaling going and going for as long as there is electricity in the man, in the world, in the universe *writ large* .

My God, Jack would later think, *there is so much electricity in the world*.

The body of the animal, of the man, under the condition of this *central sensitization* is eager for pain, ready for pain, resigned to pain. The CNS is in charge and now it has a new way of seeing the world. Its vision sees only shadows and evidence of pain; its ears hear only echoes and warnings of harm; its language speaks only of both simple and ornate ache. People -the human trapped inside the body and brain- grow tired of this monomania of this demon of pain. He -this madman once respectable, the CNS that made man so civilized after all- imbues agony with malice, intention, when everyone else *knows* it's just a dumb brute fact. Shit, pain isn't so bad, *it's useful and part of life*, they say with an encouraging nod of their head.

Pain is life , they say as they shrug their shoulders and pretend to give one fuck. *Man up* , they say as if they are wise.

This condition -*central sensitization* - usually takes seven to twelve years to manifest. It takes years after chronic pain has conditioned the body and brain to expect it. *Years like those years Blax had suffered such pain* , Jack thought as he sat in the car now in the parking lot 122-miles away from that Spring's Medical Clinic in Pueblo he had left yesterday. He looked up and saw the signage for the *Santa Clara Medical* center. He saw her walk between deep snow into the front door.

Today he was in Trinidad seeing Dr. Abigail Norris and administering the same injection of the *nanobot* for her insouciance and contempt she had shown Blax; and tomorrow he'd be in Texas handling the face of the grandfather he never knew except to hear his voice in the recording Isaiah played for him; Jack heard the bother and wife who had mocked Blax's pain.

Pain, he thought, *this was the genius of pain* . Pain knew things Jack did not; and so Jack learned -submitted to learning- from a master.

Before now he had moved too quickly, he thought, *to murder. He resorted too quickly to vengeance killings when it was so unsatisfactory and -both for him and for the universe, for God- so shallow a revenge.*

These people needed to feel pain; chronically, permanently, and with the metabolically recognized recursion that the allodynia and hyperalgesia Blax had suffered for almost forty years , Jack thought. Pain can be acute, and in balance and part of a cosmos in harmony. But chronic pain can -via attrition, alchemy, religious conversion to some death cult- turn pleasure itself back into pain. The soft stroke of a lover can abrade, the nice words flay and sound like insult. Chronic pain echoes and produces the same effect as waves consolidating -building- giant *tsunami* in the ocean, the way fires produce *pyrocumulonimbus* storms that drive lightning down to the forest to spark it ahead of the windblown burn. Feedback loops of doom begin way out at sea; deep in the forest. Chronic pain distorts the brain. The brain nudges the soul over the edge.

Nobody ever sees it coming. Because nobody lives far out in the wilderness of watery or forested nature or inhabits the most remote parts of man's dark

soul.

“The devil just takes over the world,” Jack said in a whisper as he saw in his mind like a memory the *Nazaré* Canyon off the coast of Portugal. It is a deep Atlantic Ocean trench that rises off the seabed just west of shore to produce 100-foot waves when winds far out in the ocean jam seawater through the channel below. He saw the lighthouse on *Praia do Norte* . He saw the abyssal plain riven with a 160-kilometers scar ragged and deep in the sea bottom. He had fluctuating weight of the limestone load on his coder like memories of heavy things once carried, lights flicking on and off in a storm. He breathed and brushed the unbidden image away.

Pain found a way to compound and to breed. *Like* , Jack thought, *one drop of shit ruins a gallon of clean water, but one drop of pure water does nothing to improve that gallon of shit. It was not one to one. It was not linear at all.*

Spinal cord injuries such as the kind Blax had -evidenced by the *MRIs* and *EEGs* he'd had- were the primary causes of *central sensitization* , and yet the nature of his injury played no part in the diagnostic processes of the physicians he'd seen. They ignored this data, they ignored his pain, and they thus ignored his soul.

And -technically, metabolically, evolutionarily- being ignored may be the most painful thing of all.

Most people don't know this, most doctors won't acknowledge it, but it's a medical fact that after years of chronic pain the body begins to turn light touch -loving touch- the touch of comfort or massage into the horror of more and more pain. Increased pain sensitivity had always been labeled as *tolerance* , *tolerance as code for addiction* ; as if the patient was addicted to the drug and this is why he felt less relief from the medication stingily offered for what was asserted as the same level of chronic pain.

But the data showed that this was untrue.

The data showed that the pain was in fact worse, that the patient was not tolerant to the drug, that the patient is more sensitive to the increase in pain. It was worse due to *central sensitization* . It was well documented that the patient was now feeling more and more pain as the original pain reverbed -

fed back- and corrupted all other sensation in its domain. And pain is colonial, exploratory, it's on the march like Sherman through the south; rapacious and cruel on purpose. William Tecumseh Sherman said that all war was hell and thus necessarily cruel. He'd said -logically- that the only way to end war was to make it as cruel as possible. *Shortening the hell of war*, Sherman had said, *was effected only one way: make it as cruel as one could.*

The body was attempting to make pain cruel so as to end the source -the war- of the pain, Jack thought. Pain had no idea that this war was a war with itself, like a nation cleaved in two. And while the war may end, the memory of the cruelty would remain. It would remain in the body, the nation, and the true -the actual- war would never truly -actually- end.

Pain wants the whole body, it shall not be satisfied with being hemmed in. Pain is cruel on purpose. And it wants one fucking thing; total submission. And the doctors of modernity laughed the way northerners of the 1860's did - Jack thought- as they awaited the submission of the south under the onslaught of the burning of everything as Sherman snaked to the damp coast of the Atlantic.

He saw ramshackle buildings smoldering along McDonough road, he saw copies of census data used by the General to know where to move into to glean, he saw railroads broken and softened and made into *neckties* around trees. Jack saw the order of November in 1864 to repay "local hostility" with a "devastation relentlessness" as well. He -like watching luminescent dye in the vein- saw Sherman's March to the Sea.

Jack had developed a parasite that would cause pain -not death- and he loaded it into these vectors of *nanobots* that followed him like winged angels, like missionaries, like the first seraphim and the last word of God.

As the *nanobots* injected *right-reason* of God into these professional faces it would show these anhedonia unbelievers -these pain agnostics, these heathens of the world-of-hurt- it would disclose to them that each story, homily, testimonial of pain that they had heard tales of and scoffed at until now -it would wake them to the evidence that the deity of pain- was real. And He -it would be revealed- now had His eye on them too.

They need not believe in pain, for pain would believe in them.

The revolution would devour its most devoted practitioners, Jack thought, the doctors would suffer for their allegiance to the revolution of modernity that said as its cri de guerre: patients must suffer needlessly, for the good of the fucking State. The individual doesn't matter, he is a cancer, what matters is the body writ large.

They would feel what Blax felt, minute by minute, unrelenting -and unslaked- pain. And the *neuro-toxin* he injected in them made sure that the only treatments that would work would be narcotic analgesics; not the ablations, not the massage therapy, the CBD-oil, nor the increase in NSAIDs they offered to their chronic pain patients *heretofore* . And thus these health-care-providers would see what it was to be treated as malingerers, exaggerators and drug addicts too.

The sequela of pain, to be hurting and not be believed, to suffer in silence -for no one heard you- to have pain without meaning, Jack thought as he recalled Blax saying that this was true Hell. Men were social, and to be ignored by the tribe hurt as much as the pain itself. Isolation augmented the pain.

It was a natural remedy , Jack thought, a solution sanctioned by God, a remedy both perfect and cruel . And this is exactly what these people deserved, he thought as he waited in his car outside the clinic just before the new year.

Jack had all the data from Phillips, K. & Clauw, D.J. in 2011, Wieseler-Frank, J. and Mailer, S.F. in 2005 and 97 other papers that showed -proved- his theory of pain -from 2001 to now in 2038 of this vulgar *era*- was likely correct. He had more data on file than any physician he saw. And as he implanted the payload of these *bots* in the faces of five different doctors from Denver to Pueblo to Trinidad he knew that 10,000 other physicians deserved the same thing. For they had all conspired to ruin millions of patients just like they had condemned Blax to a lifetime of unnecessary -and unhelpful- pain.

Jack wondered if they too would get headaches as Blax did, from the stress. Jack pondered the intensity of the *hyperalgesia* as the whole body was overtaken, colonized, infected in a compressed timeline by the parasite. He

wondered if they too would suffer *ennui* and *anomie* as their pain was ignored.

He wondered if it would be just as with modernity which had invaded all tribal variation -the *olde-world* phenomena of small pleasure and nuance and softness- he wondered if it would be -with each individual he infected with this monolithic type of pain- if all feeling would be supplanted with the one sensation now of the modern world: Meaningless Pain. He watched as things overtook others, as five things became just the one.

The data -information- was never enough, for he had tried to explain it. He brought to his doctor's visits the studies and their abstracts and showed how Blax had fit the profile -using his own body as stand in for his experiment- to see if they'd even relent to other physicians who had done the studies he was synthesizing for them. But doctors are like all half-bright people, they rebel when the supplicant knows more than they do. The truly brilliant is eager to be schooled; especially by the autodidact and outlaw, for this is where all true genius comes from, they know. But the middlebrow hangs tight to his mediocre opinions -his degree on the wall- and never listens to anyone without the imprimatur of the culture that corrals and corrupts them.

Name a mechanic that listens to the client's ideas on their own broke-down car; name the politician who hears a constituent's complaint; name a wife that even once listens to her husband's objections, Jack thought with eyes pointed at the front door to the clinic in winter. Name one brother than listens to his brother.

This world is rotten, Jack thought, rotten to the core. Not the world, but mankind , he amended.

These doctors would now hear their own pain, recursively, as echo off their own skulls. And the gentle touch of their lover's hand would now be too much to take; naught would assuage, nothing slake. Sounds themselves, he thought, would abrade , as the data showed, light would cause the face to shrink away, the eyes to squint, the world would become too much for these folks just as it had become for the Jacks' LT.

33. He may play the Jack of Diamonds Yes, my dear fellow, it all amounts to this: in order to do something first you must be something

1828 [Goethe, Johann Wolfgang]

Just get rid of the alpha male.

Yes, in the long run let's hope we all become more... floppy eared Radio lab [Abumrad, Jad & Krulwich, Robert]

Truth in her first tides, bears nothing but wrecks Pierre [The Author]

I. 2037 e.v.

Isaiah had thought through it all in silence.

He watched the green wall grow rapidly with the new Metal Halide/LED combo lights he'd designed and built and installed to plug into each *nanobot* that hovered over the foliage. Everything cycled in day and night time approximation; and a four-season year.

The light just appeared a few inches from the leaves and they absorbed all but the green spectrum; that which they reflected back. He tweaked their genotype slightly to produce clear -translucent- stripes running vertically with each leaf now; tiger stripping them beautifully. They looked like food to him and as the morning glories bloomed and the hummingbirds swarmed the light glowed in front of the dark verdant wall like a corona; starburst; halo.

He watched the caterpillars move in vectors like mandorla and the wasps land in the gaps. He saw light at the edge of the source; dark at the center of that.

Some of the hummingbirds were being aggressive again, but they no longer attacked the LEDs; as he had changed them sufficiently. Now they just fought over the territory of the flower bells.

He knew the human brain -even as advanced as his was- often papered over any errors in logic or planning when one merely thought their way through something complex. Man had a tendency to think they knew something through and through until they went to do it or explain it to others; then they realized how inchoate the notion was. So, he decided to write it down.

Christies auction on November 11th 2037 at 1100hrs.

The French government's paintings arrive in New York on November 8th via aircraft at 2300hrs

Russian Tolstoy museum's loan of Caravaggio arrive on November 7th via aircraft at 0345hrs

He stopped writing and double checked a few things and began a new list.

Alfred Taubman, chairman of Sotheby's served 18 months in prison for price fixing with Christie's Anthony Tennent. Taubman insisted he was framed and his underlings testified against him in court in exchange for immunity. DeDe Brooks was that very Sotheby's CEO that testified in exchange for immunity and was the one who actually planned the fixing with Tennent. Tennent remains in Britain and cannot be extradited as price fixing is not a crime in England.

Although criticizing Islam is a crime in England , Isaiah thought. He began to think again. Then he wrote: Sotheby's is a public company so losses beyond insurance threshold will redound to investors and a public bailout. Their insurance is Thranc LLC a subsidiary of Wells Fargo. That financial institution itself was the largest corporate criminal in 2018 and again in 2029 as reported by the AG at the time the FED Chairman at the time, and the President also. However, they too are backstopped by the public.

Christie's is a private company owned by Francois Pinault, who bought it 30 years ago for one billion. Their losses will be absorbed by him and the privately held insurance company, TD.

All this was simple enough, even as the biometric and biographical details of each member of each corporation -totaling 798 people- laid out in front of Isaiah like a receipt one might go over at tax time. But he wasn't concerned about the details of all that data on all those people and their companies and which government they were linked to. What he wanted was

the big picture; the strategy. *He wanted it to flow better, and right now it was awkward* , he thought.

He thought more. And then he banished it from his mind in pique. He'd decided he'd allow the algorithm to figure out the most efficient way to place the most tension on the system *via* public or private funds.

He'd also allow the algorithm MO had built determine how much of each bio-chemical -from dopamine to epinephrine to mu-opioid and androgen prompts- each military, political, and corporate leader would get and at which times; augmenting their anger, righteousness, and feelings of invincibility. This would facilitate the management of the internal system of each countries' leadership as the crimes the Jacks were committing would manage the external system of what mattered most to each man or each country. Art, wine, money, and long-standing pride and acrimony between tribes, ethnicities, and countries, would be the thing seen and felt, as the allostatic system would be pressed on by the *bots* sent out by Isaiah under the sanction of MO.

Isaiah thought of the experiments done on other primates that measured their bio-chemistry under duress; experiments done on birds where beaks were darkened to sow discord, experiments done on bacteria to see which survived or died under anti-biotic attacks. He banished these analogs and read the incoming data on his project.

But, no matter how he tried to measure it, all the data kept toggling back between 49.9% and 50.1% and it kept flipping with each addition of data. It would not settle.

And in the background of this maelstrom of data he saw the barges out to sea absorbing calcium and allowing it to excrete as the grapes of the vines gathered sugar and yeast and seahawks flew overhead. He saw the bots had built Cordon-spur and Cane pruning vines, the Geneva Double and the Keuka method of trellis on three of his barges. He watches as the leaves grew and the shoots below and the cordons below that. He then saw the gnarled bark of the cane.

He saw turnips in between the rows in *Bordeaux* , at *Château le Puy* . He saw the cross in *Burgundy* at the *Domaine* . He measured the massive sugar of this year's vintage of *Château d'Yquem* .

He watched the *bots* punch down into the *must* of the three large steel fermentation vats on the edges of each wine barge. He saw the skins float and descend and turn retrograde on the surface. He saw the froth turn pink and white. He measured the titratable acid at .60 for the red wine. He measured 168 grams *per* liter of sugar, he measured 1.063 specific gravity of the red *must* . The *pH* was 3.4 in the vat.

He read the laws against chaptalization in *Bordeaux* but allowed in *Loire* and *Burgundy* . In Oregon adding sugar is allowed due to cool weather. He saw how each region and different grapes were treated case by case. He predicted he'd get alcohol levels of 14.5% in his red wines out at sea.

He watched both the new barges and the native -and oldest- vineyards on land -the nutrients rise in the soil from the sucking straw of the turnips over a season- and he forgot all about man. And as more and more vapor and soot and smoke rose from Canada, Japan, Lebanon, Senegal, Guinea and Sierra Leone. He watched fires outside *Teno* of Chile, the *Sierra Madres* of *Oriente* province; he saw that 49% of the *Sioma Ngwezi* Park, 81% of the *Mo-remi* Reserve, and all but forty kilometers of the forest between *Kereru* and *Pukehou* of the north island burned. He watched the fires in New Jersey, New Mexico, Arizona -all around Colorado- and down in the panhandle of Florida -all around the *Ponce de Le ón* - as well.

But as he followed his barges with his eyes above linked to the *Landsats* and the *bots* -and like the thin bright line of a western sunset makes one forget the sun still boils- he now barely saw the forests continued to burn. The *bots* measured the particulates in the air, the amount of calcium dissolving in the ocean, the direction and distance that the fire ash carried the CaCO_3 farther, and how much faster the *pH* of the oceans forced the nutrient down.

Isaiah ignored the updated report on the amount of year-to-date *calcium carbonate* in seashells & snails, lizard & leviathan skeletons and then in large mammal & human bones.

He thought of the massive slabs of marble he would hew from metamorphosized limestone in the deep ocean under the deep-water-culture of the vines.

“Fuck it,” Isaiah said and organized the list of action items for himself and Blax. He DM’d the man high in the mountains of southern Colorado as he was scraping brown rice from the grey pan into a large matte black bowl. Isaiah dimmed the lights of the lab and sat down on the concrete floor to watch *Lot 45* from there.

It was still early evening and all the doors were open on the container. Blax cooked and music played; Jack One was at his 9 o’clock just outside the metal home. He’d removed the BCG from his carbine and was rubbing CLP over it like one pulls through the leaves to a drooping plant or flower in open bloom.

Blax read the DM from Isaiah and wrote a few things down on a piece of paper and called Jack One to the kitchen to taste the rice and read the paper. Blax had to feed him as Jack held the part in both hands and leaned in with just the face toward the spoon.

“It’s good, moist; but not wet,” Jack said of the rice and read the list below him on the counter. “Seems, ok. Why do we care?” he asked as he dropped his hand -and the bolt carrier group- to his side.

“It’s interesting, so,” Blax shrugged.

“Jack,” Jack One yelled into the agogic pad as Jack Three turned from his carving -into & upon- the fireplace. He looked over top of his safety goggles. A *cabeceo* was given and received and Jack Three rose and walked toward them; he took off his taut black work gloves and rose the eyewear over the brow.

“What’s up?” he asked.

Jack One handed Jack Three the note and Blax began explaining to him that the Christie’s auction would have books, art, and some other things in New York. He explained -as the maps to the area populated their coders- that they were to take them while they were held at the storage facility on *Imlay* Street a few days before auction.

“But, here’s the deal, Christies is a private company, and not back-stopped by the public, just like the *château* we hit; so, they will be privately insured. We are going to ruin *Francois Pinault* , who just so happens to be in league with the French and Belgium banks owned by the *Rothschilds* .

They are going to start taking this shit personally very soon and put even more pressure on the French and US governments to solve this problem.

“The British -having restored the Marbles in 2025- will be demanding a full audit of the works taken in Greece. They gave it all up only on condition of joint ownership and they insisted that security in England was superior to *Grecian* curatorship for this very reason. That fight is happening now.

“The whole thing is hinging on placing blame for all of it on the Chinese. Now the wine -10% of the wine- is at *Jack Ma’s Château* a few miles from *Bordeaux*. His number one’s fingerprints and DNA are on a *Margaux* bottle not yet discovered. Plus, he is partners with three banks; all shell corporations for the Chinese government that nobody has cared about until now,” Blax laid it out.

He moved back and leaned against the slab and on each side of him was the *mise-en-place* of the red pepper cut on the bias, the orange squash in circles stacked like dominos already felled, the wet banana peppers in a heap above a shallow black bowl, the green leaf in whole shells laid out like a larger Lion’s Paw Scallop shell, the blue berries stacked in nine layers of three pyramids of unequal size, and the purple cabbage shredded into wrinkly strands like shorn manes of royal roan-mares. Blax leaned in front and crossed his arms.

“What’s *now* ?” Jack Three asked.

“Now, well, in a week, *now* will be the rip off of almost a billion in art and books -and loaned art- from three governments; Italy, Russia and France. And a British company will be to blame; the same company currently blaming Greece for the loss of the Marbles. France is going to find out about the Chinese within forty-eight-hours of that, and those banks connected to *Ma* are going to find some of the stolen merch from the New York Christie’s heist in their vaults in England as well.

“Chinese banks in England?” Jack Three asked with incredulity as he sat on the rough concrete floor of the container and Jack One leaned into the black metal jamb.

“Yes, because they are owned by a cutout and staffed by British nationals, they are -on the outside- British. Now, the Russians are going to be pissed

about their loaned art and blame the British and the Americans; the French will blame China and England; the Greeks will blame China and Britain; and the Chinese will be in full panic mode as the Americans decide that China is pulling a force move.

“The US government will be thinking that the Chinese are beginning something now that they are -actually- still a few years away from.

“It will look like a tip of the hand, like a move right before some invasion; essentially that they are collecting all the Western art for safekeeping before an invasion. Like the Nazis and Soviets did during WWII; but beforehand; not after invasion,” Blax said.

“But, that is what we are doing,” Jack Three said. Jack One immediately gave him the *no shit* look. It was mainly the tilt of the head like a dog, but it did include the furrowed brow and tongue between the back teeth of a set jaw. Jack Three ignored it in his affect but not in his mind.

“Bingo. We are storing all this shit to keep it safe. But, one cannot wait. Obviously, the Muslims are still prime targets for the vandalism of the *châteaux* of *Bordeaux* and in Greece, and those Right-wing governments will allow that to remain the narrative. And look, don’t feel sorry for the Muslims, they would have burned *Bordeaux* and smashed the Marbles if they had thought of it first.

“They are just too busy doing other horrid things to focus on what each nation loves most. That is the price for being inbred, religious zealots. They have no empathy, so they don’t know how to hurt their enemies. But we do,” Blax said and offered Jack Three some rice. Bending down to reach the man as he sat.

Jack Three waved it off and -as he stared at the paper- said, “ok, so US banks?”

“TD and Wells Fargo will be pissed and demand recompense, but that is when we reveal their dirty laundry as soon as they go public with demands for a bailout; which they always do and always will,” Blax said as had stood back up and he bent the neck back at the shoulders and forward at the head. Jack One looked at him resettle at the counter and saw the raw food behind him like refracted water catching a moment of sun.

“Dirty laundry?” Jack asked.

“Yeah both banks have been engaged in massive money laundering for transnational cartels and we have the records of large cash deposits in *Geneva* and *Bogotá* and *Brussels*,” Blax said as Jack interrupted.

“Oh, and give it to the media?” Jack Three asked as he looked up from the paper.

“Fuck no, the media is owned by the banks. They don’t cover corporate crime. No, we have those banks dead-to-rights and will offer that *intel* to each government from Russia to the US itself,” Blax explained.

“What does?” Jack asked with a pause. Blax saw that they still didn’t think like criminals nor outlaws, and so the logic of predation and escape & evasion was still harder for them; it wasn’t yet intuitive. He reminded himself to be patient and teach them.

He remembered the way he tried to temper Jack One in all his tribal zeal - Blax saw in the memory of their conversation the blackbirds with one wing bent under in a gentlemanly bow; barrel rolling a thousand feet before he and his Jacks even walked the vines- and now with Jack Three he had to instruct on where an enemy -like a bank- was weakest. It was not with the media -the myth of the fifth estate- but with governments. The only predator even close in strength and malice to a corporation was a government and it would take two or three large State’s to take on one conglomerate bank like the Rothschild’s.

He barely heard the squawking of the crows; he saw no tracks of the wolves. He thought of the banks as a complete beast and then he saw each muscle and organ along their flank; he knew where behind the shoulder lay the heart. He thought now he’d point to where they were to place the broadhead.

“Jack, it gives everyone leverage, to negotiate from strength. We want everyone cocky as hell. And look it will be more and more banks over time, because the money goes everywhere, and Isaiah has all the data held in reserve. But he will leak it selectively as each institution demands payment; more and more banks will call in loans; and they loan most to governments. The very governments who will be pissed. The governments who will be

making sure the citizens of each of their rivals knows all about the scams. It will be all out warfare between the governments and the banks; the public being manipulated by all sides. The media won't be in charge of any of it; they'll just have to watch.

"Eventually -the loss of these assets will cause a cascade of margin-calls, calling in of notes on properties, and loss of lines-of-credit for payroll- everyone's liquidity will dry up and -when the national bail-out comes- the public will be livid right before the 2038 election. Oh, and with our candidates running in two thirds of seats. Because right now it's the end of 2036 but in three years it's just shy of 2040, and we have the congress and maybe even the White House by then," Blax said.

He saw the arrow fly through the air; he saw saturnine fletching from the rear.

"Chess like a mother," Jack said and looked at Jack One who was just staring at Jack Three like he wanted to break something over his head. But he didn't say anything. Jack One hated chess and he thought of the chess pieces Jack Three had carved from soapstone -they sat on a slate board in the container in his bunk in the container above them- and he imagined using the Rook to mark steel for his next armor plating build. Jack One had reinforced the whole compound with steel as the other Jacks just laughed and shook their heads. He now smirked at the idea of him using the soapstone chess-piece to write hash marks and measurements like $5/8^{th}$ or draw *birdmouths* on their piles of half-inch Corten steel.

But, he then dismissed it as petty and looked back at the piles of raw food.

"Isaiah has it down to details a thousand times more particular than my *re-hash* . What I just gave you was the cliff notes version. But, he's covering both sides of the equation," Blax said and added the dark tamari and light nutritional yeast to the brown short-grain rice in the pot. He grabbed the sliced black and purple *kalamata* olives and like zeros scattered them on the strips -themselves like tally marks- of warm pink & brown elk in the grey & black bottom of the pan.

"Like what?" Jack was smiling now.

“It’s like the invisible hand of the market. Not an overt move -just slight manipulation- which is what State-craft is anyway; only it’s done better when done by Isaiah,” Blax said as he poured a splash of the wine into the pot and the rest into the *carafe* .

“Well, look, I just want that *Caravaggio* -over the fireplace- right here. We can encase it in plexiglass of course, and I’ll take first shift to guard it from black bear and thieves,” Jack Three said as they all suppressed a laugh ending up with that endogenously crooked -and silent- smile; the *ankyos* of the Greek bones. Their skulls had a slight rise to the left of the upper jaw, the *maxilla* , and the facial muscles merely copied that structure with the smile that demanded it be taken as a smirk.

“The paintings,” Blax chided, “go with everything else: in the vault. Which by the way, I do not know where it is, that is all Isaiah; he has it all figured out. Apparently, it’s underground, encased in like ten-meters of concrete on all sides and large enough to house ten times what we took. And we took a lot. So, we, as you recall, we left it all in containers at port and he had it trucked to location, he says.

“But, he says it’s so close to us that we should be able to feel it,” Blax said as he added some cumin and covered the rice. He lit a low flame under the raw venison in the third pan.

“Feel it?” Jack One asked.

“Yeah, he said we’re all such princesses we should be able to feel it like that one in the story; the ninety-nine mattresses?” Blax said asking at the end for them to recall.

“I don’t know it; he called us princesses?” Jack One asked with agitation. He slid the BCG into the receiver from the weapon he’d taken down off the wall.

“Yeah, I don’t know that story either, is it Russian?” Jack Three asked. He pushed down on his work gloves in his back pocket.

“Yeah, he called us princesses; but he was joking. *Sorta* ,” Blax said as he removed the lid to the elk cooking on the low flame. The juices were escaping the flesh and combining with heat and salt and turning a petro-black in the bottom. Bubbles collected in hives, nests, at stochastic points

inside the circle of the pot. *Like honeycombs ; like fly eyes* , Blax thought as he then saw the condensation on the lid bottom as he held it at 45-degrees to the pot.

Jack One lifted the carbine and set it on the hooks above the bookcase built into the wall. He pressed it to the wall and held his hand there for a second to make sure it didn't move.

“Look, we *kinda* act precious sometimes. That's all he meant. Look, compared to him we *kinda* do. I mean the guy gets nothing extra in life -he is stuck in a room the size of this pad- and goes through shit I can't imagine. I mean he eats and breathes this thing, it's his whole life. And he has no time for fun or girls,” Blax said as he added garlic he had minced - and basil from the garden- to the grey pan of flushed elk meat. He recovered the steam as it moved laterally under -and away from- the heavy lid and was sucked into the fan over the range.

“Either do we,” Jack Three said as Jack Four arrive from his run with his *Caius* at his heel.

“Hey Jack,” Blax said happily to Jack Four. Blax ignored Jack Three's complaint. A slight change in Jack Three's brain just then occurred, his expression of lack, of slight pain from the lack of love -his expression ignored- and the simultaneous greeting -with *frisson* - of Jack Four by Blax made his brain wire together rejection and slight diminution of his status among the four Jacks. And this wired with the *imprimatur* Blax subconsciously gave to Jack Four.

In a half second that nobody would remember nor have opinion on, something massive -and electric and biochemical, something that goes on each second of each day in each boy to build *phonemes* and then syllables and then words and then ideas and then ideals and then men- occurred. Like termites build tunnels that match up, like bees forage or stay back at the hive, like men shake hands and agree to disagree on one thing of many, Jack Three's CNS rewired just one little place at a time.

Jack remembered the *château* at *Latour* . He recalled the moment when he thought: *they think whales were like hippos; all ham-fisted, and that maybe man would give up his right to manipulate too one day*. He saw the whales lose each digit and men sew up flesh and epidermal layers over the parts of

mind that turn ideas and things over and over in this head full of brine. He remembered thinking: *although some men thought to abandon the crass and tawdry business of business*. He recalled realizing this was not enough.

He remembered saying all this -of forefinger and thumb, of man and leviathan- to himself as the DXsF-3 ran the length of the 97-hectares of the property and stood at the north west corner waiting for his protocol release; for his permission to burn it for the good of some man above him; for the good of many men below.

But here and now -as the evening came and Blax cooked and Jack Four would eat- Jack Three just felt what he felt; it had no words, no names, no *gestalt* ideas attached. But his brain was hot and different, and thus different things would begin to agitate and build-up. Jack Three's brain would attach to the idea that Jack Four was thus -for now slightly, but in the future grandly- in charge of something the universe itself understood.

"Hey, I *gotta* do some welding on the gate later, the bears have fucked it up scratching their asses on it I guess," Jack Four said with a mouth full of saliva -triggered by the smell of the food- and an eye roll full of resignation to entropy and decay, "so can I eat now?"

Blax handed Jack Three -closest to him on the floor- a bowl of rice and venison he had cooked earlier -without garlic- that had peanut sauce with raw cashews that he had chewed himself and annealed with black mission figs. The black fork sank into the shades of brown -from peanut to deer meat- in a layer with purple cabbage and piquant basil planted in rows of rice inside the bowl like a little garden. It was beautiful and Jack Three admired it -as an Olympic god might as one of the green and blue planets moved in its annual orbit- as it passed from Blax to himself and then -with an arm that felt weak to him he noticed- up to Jack Four.

"Look, he was joking, he is merely saying compared to him we are princesses, but obviously compared to *joe-sixpack* we are pretty austere. That is the joke, you *gotta* expand your idea of funny to include shit that makes fun of you," Blax said and -walking to the egress- put his hand on Jack One's shoulder as Jack nodded with a grimace. He was in the opposite door jamb mumbling, "I don't want to," as rebuttal.

"Anyway, when do we meet for the final battle plan?" Jack Three asked.

“Tomorrow, after I have all details on security and the list of what is what,” Blax said.

“What? We *hittin’* Christie’s?” Jack Four asked with a mouth full of food.

“Yeah, looks like next week,” Blax said. “And where is Jack?” he asked as they pinged Jack Two.

“I have an idea for the gold in Fort Knox,” Jack Four said next as he downloaded all the data -of maps and details- from their *convo* while he was away on his run.

“What?” Blax said; he hated it when Jack did this. He didn’t exactly believe it, but he still hated it every time Jack Four got an idea and said it aloud; he felt it was an incantation -or at least a premonition- and it made him nervous.

“Yeah, *aqua regia* , you ever heard of it?” Jack Four asked -chewing his food and thinking it needed a bit more sea salt- as Jack One and Three walked away.

“Oh, Jesus, ok,” Blax said and laughed as he ferreted out a *cigarillo* from his pocket and lit it. He was now mumbling to himself as he watched Jack One wander down the container’s hall with his hands up in a stretch and avoiding the northern wall of books.

II. 2019 e.v.

MO sat at the counter and flexed his calves under his pants; splaying his feet to mimic the way the inmate had told him he walked up hill in talus or snow to dig in; MO liked to use his body to learn from the inmate, not just his mind. Of course, he did this only because the inmate had enjoined him to do so; he -MO replayed on his interface- had said: Every guy in the gym ignores his weakest spot; and over-focuses on what’s already developed. I did this too; for years. But then I began doing squats, legs twice as often as chest and biceps, which were already fine. And my legs got strong, my ass got strong and I never looked back. I do the same thing intellectually, I read physics and math because that is where I am weakest; and I read my enemies, people I disagree with; people I even hate.

It’s hard, but that is where learning is.

I've held every position one can hold, I have lived five men's lives. Who can do that authentically, you know, without being a phony? It's only possible if you listen to your enemies and learn shit you don't already know and believe. It's the single most rare trait in people; and evolution is fine with that.

You know why? Because people are born with temperament; and that temperament determines their politics and personality; and because humans -as a population- have a relatively equal distribution of these innate -genetic- personality temperaments, and it's about 50/50 between traits that make half of us conservative and half liberal, then it all works out without any one person having to change.

It's genius. But, that's the macro analysis. That's why human cultures work, due to this distribution of people who cannot change or learn or grow. But fuck society, I'm talking about being a human -an honest, genuine, curious and open person- who can truly listen to the other *fella* . And I can do that. It ain't easy, but I force myself, just like I force myself to do squats when I really *wanna* bench press.

I have authentically been everything I've been; and I've been everything a man can possibly be [laughter]. And I'm sure I'll change again; because I'm always open to new ideas. What is consistent with me is that I care about one thing: authenticity. Being real; whatever it is you truly feel, be that. Do not fake it. Period. Do that and the earth will take care of itself.

MO recalled that conversation -letting the transcript timestamp to the cloud again- and he remembered the analogy of weight lifting. He focused on his calves today because he never thought of them. They never were sore, and never seemed necessary for the movements he did; so, he flexed them to deepen the cortical trenches in his *somatosensory cortex* and *motor cortex* analogs that linked his calves to his brain. He then thought of the corollary to that conversation; he played the cloud's recording of the conversation again into the lab as the text appeared on the monitors too: And so that's what we did; we marched right up that hill, that one-to-one slope, two feet deep with talus and sand and the rain began hitting us at an oblique angle, it was as if nothing was straight, man. And if you pointed your boots up hill,

straight in front, you'd slip down -and then fall all the way down- and your hands -even if splayed as widely as you get can those fingers apart man- even then you would still fall into the softness of the slope and be buried up to your wrists. And that 80-pound hammer drill and the two lengths of bit -drill bit- you carried on your back -one 2-footer and one 4-footer- would push your whole body into the detritus of the slope.

So, you learned to turn your feet at a forty-five too, right? You matched the input from Nature, the slope was a forty-five, the rain was hitting you at a forty-five, and your body wised up and turned those skis [subject means, *feet*] to the forty-five and you dug your insoles in -at a forty-five- into the talus and boom you had a functional foot now. You could make progress with this awkward foot position that would never work on the street, in the high-rises, in the halls of congress [laughter].

Little things like that can teach you so much, MO; if you are willing to *be* a body; *be* period *a* period *body* period. Don't *have* a body, *be* a body. Use it to listen; you have interoception -that's something I learned about way after this, mind you- but interoception is like this pre-emotional state, it's a sense and feedback systems within your body that checks up on what Lisa Barrett calls *the body budget* .

It monitors heart rate and glucose and blood flow and *temp* and *pH* and all of it man. And at some point in evolution -and she and I disagree on this part, but she's probably right and I'm likely wrong, but I just think I'm right anyway [laughter]. But anyway, at some point the *limbic* system develops enough to take interoception to the next level; the next fine-grained awareness and manipulation.

I mean, isn't that what all of life does? It -from the simple sponge to the most creative human- [uncorrected syntax] all life is aware of something and tries to manipulate it to get what it needs; desires. She uses the word *prediction* a lot, I use *desire* . I think we desire things, and prediction is lower down.

But anyway, the point is at some point the *limbic* system does not merely predict how the internal *milieu* is going, it begins to have emotions, feelings -what is called *qualia* in modern science- and these feelings allow for a more nuanced awareness and reaction or manipulation.

Interoception can have *affect* -pleasant or unpleasant, and *arousal* , high energy or low. But that's it. It's like the 4-color crayon box.

But emotions, well, that's the 64-color box. You can be much, much more now; you can feel much, more much. You can perceive more, variegate your response better. It's more than: move toward, or move away; move quickly or slowly. No, now it's like *Kun Tao* : to thwart your enemy, you move in closer -a risky move- you move a few degrees from center; override your instinct to move away and move in. Ok, so that's emotion, you feel something more complex -even risky- like *love* , like *fraternity* and you feel the nuance of fear, joy, excitement, vulnerability, meaning, meaning, MO. Meaning is the alignment of all levels of one's 64-color body.

Not merely the mind.

Focus on this: *meaning* , is the alignment of the interoceptive body, basic body, metabolic base, ok that's one; the affect or the arousal. Ok, now, second, two, [subject's redundancies unexpurgated] you feel the emotions of *desire* and specific interest and solidarity and sadness and rage at injustice. And then third, three, you measure the high level of *progress* toward a goal; a noble goal. Progress toward the slaking of these lower order feelings, is the feeling of meaning. But all three levels must obtain for one to even reach that third level. Like a tree's boughs can't reach out so far unless its roots dig down and out in symmetry.

Did you know that a tree's bough shape actual does mimic its root ball shape? [interviewer answers in the affirmative]

See, the concept of *noble* -as defined by your lower order selves- is what is salient.

See, those nuanced fine-grained selves, all those emotions and the affect and arousal that undergird them -and that goal- has a grip on you, man. It hangs there like a ball of light, illuminating itself, the world and your face, bro. And that goal has you in its tractor beam and as you move toward it your *thalamic* system floods you in dopamine and endogenous opiates and vasopressin and man, you feel imbued with the breathing, filling, expanding lung of God, you feel buoyed and sustained and like you could live on sunlight; no need for food nor water.

It's meaning MO; *meaning* . And it's a body state; it's real. It's as real as pain. And I tell you, I like *real* ; I thrive on *real* ; I search out the most authentic thing in the world, in others and in myself and I found it in meaning and pain; those are my two contractual handshakes with God and Satan. Those are it. I bet my life on *pain* and *meaning*, MO.

The nihilists, the doom-merchants, the new-atheists, they have it all wrong. And I had it all wrong. But I didn't know the biology, the neuro-anatomy. But, [inaudible] -oh, and I didn't understand what religion truly was either, that was a problem [laughter]. But anyway, I have the science now, some of it anyway.

And I feel like while emotions might have merely been the interoceptive systems going for more options at first, what emotions led to, the capacity for meaning and suffering -the capacity to feel pain not just as affect and arousal, but as *suffering* - well, that was the big bang, the singularity. And from there we got inflation, we got the inflationary model of the inner universe, the internal landscape: we got *meaning* as the expanse; we got meaning as the contrast to suffering, the deep black of space itself. And it was being populated by shiny shit more and more as it grew.

Meaning is the planets, the stars, the nebulae, the rings of Saturn, the moons of Neptune, meaning is the matter that populates the cosmos of our inner lives. And it's real, as real as the material universe we see around us. Meaning is the light that is thrown off -in 360-degrees- at 186,000 feet *per* second into more and more of the suffering black.

I believe that. Not because Deepak Chopra's dumb ass said a spell, you know, cast a spell over a glass of water or whatever the fuck that goofy fuck does. I believe it because I aligned the biology and the neuro-chemistry, and human personality and psychology along with a true understanding of the role of narrative, of myth, of religion as body-instinct and action. I understood it *vis-à-vis* the body, this [subject strikes chest three times, with force]; we are not computers, and either are you, MO. We are physical. Learn it, know it, live it. [laughter].

MO ran that audio-visual simulation in his *cortex* twice and stacked both form and content vertically along two separate columns looking for

patterns. The inmate spoke like a man who had an internal cadence, a hippodrome -a preacher and poet- inside him that was allowed to speak every third line. MO calibrated it so that it seemed a poetical rhythm or cadence or pacing was imbued in every 2.48 words; and he stacked that on top of his own algorithm for speech and saw their discontinuity.

He, MO thought of himself, spoke a-rhythmically, he spoke with some fealty to human pattern, but more toward Steven and Tania's style, stilted, functional . The inmate spoke with some other kind of phenomena inside his sentences, even just his individual words .

MO then built four algorithms to map and mimic this style while averting any overt imitation; he would have to slowly change his speech and writing style; so as to not jar the novel-detection systems on his human partners. He would appear to be *influenced* , not copying. *That was the key* , he thought.

He then tapped into the cloud service and into the inmate's nine former phones. Seven of them were on the Apple cloud system, two on Google's. He scanned all the photos and *note* files featuring everything from liabilities, receivables, shopping lists to prose poetry he wrote on his phone.

There were over 45,566 photos total, and 333,401 words. He began building visual algorithms to set different boundaries on the photos, learning what was important in each visual field, where lines meant separation and where they were more or less inclusive of the *gestalt* image. It was a part of vision that humans took for granted when they opened their eyes: they saw the world in a manner that made sense, their *visual cortex* made sense of the world so easily; naturally.

Human sight -and thus humans' approximated reality- was bounded: trees had bark, animals had hides, and other men where separate from you both in distance and aims.

MO distorted his visual acuity, increasing and modifying endogenous chemicals like DMT, dopamine, oxytocin and testosterone in accordance with an algorithm he had built three days ago. It was an idea he had had after reading Terrence McKenna's *oeuvre* ; and he had decided to build short acting distortion programs that mimicked entheogen experiences had by humans and other mammals and birds.

He viewed the photos now under these internal conditions and allowed the inmate's notes to be read aloud by his internal audio system.

A song from the inmate's 3rd phone played; MO heard the music and the lyrics as one thing, as if the words themselves plucked the strings, the melody blooming into petals of each word. The symbolism in the narrative was taken down to the first layer -the card game- and built up to something else: He deals the cards as a meditation And those he plays never suspect...

MO let it play as he noticed that many of the images were filtered -black and white, sepia toned- and used narrow-depth of field programs to impose a certain mood on them by forcing fovea -focus- and increase contrast between manifold shades. There were patinaed, craquelured, and some with typewriter-font letters and words embossed on the images. MO looked at both the originals and the filtered images and compared them to each other and the interoceptive affect and higher-order emotion that attended each in order to gain an understanding of the differences.

He ran his psychotropic compound algorithm alongside this process in bursts; a toggling back and forth between images, sounds, and brain states that worked a bit like a human comparing things over days and months and years. MO merely accelerated an approximation of what might occur to a man who viewed art and poetry -alongside more mundane life cycles- along a vector of brain states mimicking the morphology that obtained to a boy as he moved into manhood, and then into a state of wisdom *via* pain, tragedy, suffering and with annual acid, mushroom or *ayahuasca* trips.

MO did this over an eight minute period that compressed enough of this type of data and experience -in terms of file size- that was the equivalent of forty-five years of human life. *Of course, it was merely one kind of life, one of images and sounds and brain states, truncated for sure*, MO admitted to himself.

The interactions with real people, with action, movement, were removed; but it was a start ; MO was going for some way to alter his mode of being, to see if he could jump start an emotional response. He certainly felt his brain and attending *neuro-anatomy* augment and wane in places; he also certainly witnessed the boundaries of images, of objects, bend and blur and jump like particles in super-position. It was odd; and it re-organized his

steady-state -base-line- idea on borders even once his CNS returned to ground-zero bio-chemically speaking.

Borders seemed salient, he thought.

He allowed the inmate's phone notes to read out over images from timelines similar enough to conjoin them. It was a rough way to place thoughts, feelings and inspirations over things he had seen and taken still images of, but it built a kind of narrative that seemed useful to MO. He had a version of a four-decade movie and narrative voice-over that seemed to -at first- compress into a kind of a ball of identity then it cracked and shone rays of further compressed frequencies of radiation, red and blue spectrum bordered by blacks and whites.

MO saw the inmate age from a boy of nine months -the earliest image- with a scowl, as if the world he had just been born into was not quite right in some way to his desirous new born body; from there to a boy growing tall, thin, with hair falling brown to his shoulders. He was often alone. He wore camouflage pants, black t shirts, and sharpie-marked-up shoes. He had a crooked grin, and incisors that were lupine; he had a brow that hooded his dark eyes. MO could see the man behind the boy's mien. *The recesses would grow darker*, he thought. *Not merely the weather of outer surface of dentine and skin, but the roil of things lower down below ground.*

The words came in waves -the algorithm ran it along the timeline of the images, this controlled its flow- and MO's audio program augmented the voice to sound as the inmate's did now and also might have in these earlier ages. MO watched as some images contained the inmate's father in the background, stern and arms folded, a furrowed brow with the same placement and vector of lines that the inmate now had. Their brows were almost identical MO noticed, only the inmate's fissures were much more deeply incised, more ragged and blacker due to this depth of horizon of the dent brow.

"And the scar from the eye to the jaw," MO said aloud.

His mother appeared here and there, like a ghost, both in the original images and in the filtered ones, as if nature and nurture had agreed that she was merely to birth him and then step out of the way. Images of bones, of birds -of objects, toys of his youth- populated MO's visual field as an audio

file of the inmate speaking to his far-away father -on TDY, *temporary duty* as it was called in the Air Force- and the boy was ebullient and chatty and breathed heavy at odd times in the tape.

A photo lingered for MO. It was of Lee MacLeod -the inmate's father- returning from six months of assignment in East Germany, hirsute with a black and grey beard, as dark and grey -roan- as the inmate's now was; his nose just coming out of the razor-sharp phase as the inmate's too at that age. It was as if weathering had softened the prow of each of their ships -once aerodynamic for the outward-bound journey- but now the nose was now rounded and muted and maybe more useful in other ways, if not for slicing the obstacle of wind.

Maybe, MO thought, they -on the homeward bound trip- were not as interested in making good time.

More photos from teen years, holidays were dominant in the images, Christmas and birthdays, and the sullen and flanking stares of the father, the brother, even the mother; as if they were watching his 9 o'clock and his 3. It was as if the world was coming for him whether he knew it or not. *Although that kind of vigilance could be attributed to the father: a spy, law-enforcement, and naturally vigilant,* MO thought. *But the mother seemed maybe to just be looking away . Away,* MO repeated in his head, *from her son who she did not know; a son, whom she could know no better by looking his way .*

MO began layering in notes written decades later from these images but referenced either time or place or people MO gleaned from the data in the visual files; a narrative was being formed. And the inmate began speaking over the photos in MO's mind now, from age twenty-five or so. MO added music files that were contemporaneous with these timelines as well; not obtrusively, but as background like a skeleton moving in 4/4 time as flesh was laid upon it -rhythmically- from above. One note read: "As the Great Cathedral of Cologne was left with the crane still standing upon the top of the uncompleted tower. For small erections may be finished by their first architects; Grand ones, true ones ever leave the copestone to posterity... this whole book is a draught!

The truest of all men is the man of sorrows...

There is no steady unretracting progress in this life; we do not advance through fixed gradations, and at the last one pause. Through infancy's unconscious spell, boyhood's thoughtless faith, adolescence's doubt -the common doom- then scepticism (sic), then disbelief, resting at last in manhood's pondering repose of IF.

But once gone through, we trace the round again; and are infants, boys and men, and IFs eternally. Where lies the final harbor, whence we unmoor no more? In what rapt ether sails the world, of which the weariest will never weary? Where is the foundling's father hidden? Our souls are like orphans whose unwedded mothers die in bearing them: the secret of our paternity lies in their grave, and we must there to learn it” -The Author The words seemed to slip in betwixt the photos, the borders of his hands and muscles and outline of jaw; his sentences pronounced themselves right on top of the girls and the friends and the few images of family like a one-rapt gavel, and yet he often imbued his paramours and comrades and father and mom with a grandeur -a halo- a cracked but noble visage; a stele in repose. Even when the anguish of the prose illuminated the betrayal and rancor he felt, the images he curated still made them look their best; not their worst.

MO read more notes he had gathered from the inmate's phones: Hither and tither on high glided the Snow White wings of small Unspeckled birds these were the gentle thought of the feminine air; but to and fro in the deeps, far down in the bottomless blue rushed mighty leviathans, sword fish and sharks and these were the strong troubled murderous thinking of the masculine sea. (p. 554) *He made his foes bigger, better, more ominous and powerful than they maybe were . Was that for them or him ?* MO wondered. *For us?*

It was as if he was saying -MO thought- look, these are the beasts that laid me so low, these are the 12 labors of Hercules, not some weak and earthly foils, but gods and goddesses who smashed me with bolts from Jove and coup de foudres of Zues, these were the trident of Neptune not the mere slander of regular folks with regular forks in their regular goddamn hands. These were the forces of nature!

He, MO concluded, elevated his worst enemies to chimeras of scorpions and men, portmanteaux of bulls and hydra-headed women, banshees and black bats and large cracks in the earth. He gave his suffering a brocade, an ornate framing; his losses the prose of the tragedy; his total defeats the poetry of Lucretius and Shakespeare and Milton and of course Ahab himself.

The inmate had 1,689 photos and essays with direct references to Captain Ahab -Fate's Lieutenant- and they shone through the Calvinistic black like stars in a wilderness sky; unpolluted by man's vulgar approximation of light.

MO watched as the George Klauba painting of *Ahab* and *Fedallah* and *Queequeg* all scrolled over his mind's eye, the portraits the inmate painted and drew loaded on his interface too. The full pages of texts from modern editions and a few from the 1851 *Town Ho* story published in *Harper's Magazine* ; the edges gilt with foxing, the pages spotted like fauns. MO observed it all.

There were scribblings and scratchings and vague references to a ship's captain, all of course meaning any commander of any thing. *A monomania - no doubt- shared between each author. But why, MO asked, why such focus on these characters, these stories, these tragedies? Was he not leaning into the curve, allowing his own life to become a tragedy by following the arc of such men -men from bleak tragedies- that man was not forced -any longer- to live. Life could now be good. Was the inmate begging for a wreck, daring the world to betray him, so he could justify unleashing his wrath? His bottled up -under pressure- wrath?*

Was he looking for a fight?

MO thought of the whole -the compendium of images and prose- and he compared it to other profiles of random people he had gathered from the web. He downloaded similar timelines for 103,890 people in 44 countries and found their rendering of their own lives to be both similar to each another and quite different from the inmate's.

They had a paucity of some things, a deluge of others, and a mode of narration that struck MO as truncated, censored, maybe even missing in some way. It was as if their real thoughts had not been written down; as if

the images that showed anything revealing had been kept away from the cloud. He found even the colors monochromatic in their lack of theme, a *pastiche* of uncoordinated hues; the events or places to be almost artificially similar.

He searched his mind -his conversations with the inmate- for an analysis and came up only with specifics similar to what he had already thought. He wanted a synthesized word for this phenomenon; he wanted to know what it was that he was missing, what these people were missing, what -if anything- could be said to make its difference in tone and tenor and everything else make sense compared to the vagaries of still image, of motion, of real and imagined, of prose and narration, of inner monologue and search for the truth that rose up and sank down into everything the inmate had soaking up in his clouds.

MO lacked judgment in this domain he concluded. He could merely describe it, but not synthesize it. He could lay adjectives on it all but never a noun. *What was it?* he thought now along parallel tracks. He put ninety-nine vectors on it, shutting down his background brain states that regulate his heart and lungs and the data he was supposed to be tracking on the election polling, and he focused all his parallel processing onto answering this vexing question; a slippery question.

His brain was oxygenated for up to 87 minutes without a breath or even one heartbeat, so allowing these functions to cease was of no consequence. It merely slowed and stopped his circadian rhythm inside; as if the seasons paused for an Indian Summer or a winter snow storm came in April or May. He thought, and he forced more brute cognition on the matter, enlarging, augmenting, vitiating, compressing, tilting and torturing the images and text and video files of each other human and compared it to the inmate's forwards and back.

The blues , he thought, *the color blue is almost entirely absent from the inmate's images, and it's ubiquitous in everyone else's.*

He ruminated on this, as a hue -as a clue- as some hidden cypher or obvious fact. What did this 509.3 to 1 ratio between them and he mean? *Was it subconscious or overt, was it part of his trait personalities, or an aspect of his visual system; did he even see blue? Did he even see blue ?* MO

repeated -unhelpfully he thought- as the repeated words toggled off three of his algorithms like a sneeze forces the eyes to close.

There was some debate on whether or not the Greeks even saw blue; the *Iliad* had no references to it, and this gave MO a pause. He read a note of commentary taken from a reading of Simon Baker's, *Rome* that the inmate had in his notes:

The Romans having lost 45,000 men in battle the previous day, found a buyer for the unsold parcel of land that Hannibal had encamped upon and besieged. That is balls -the type a whole people had- that now hang from the core of few men of the modern age. To promise your buyer -as a prerequisite for the deal- to make contingent that you will by-force-of-arms dislodge Hannibal's army yourself before the sale goes through? Who does that? What modern real estate broker even think in such terms; let alone has the will and force to make it happen -which the Romans obviously had- who?

You can't even get a home loan if you live in a flood plain now so risk averse we all are. But these guys confidently do a real estate deal -with Hannibal having killed 45,000 men the day before- and they say to the buyer, 'oh, yeah, we'll get your plot back, hang tight.' It's a world none of us can hope to understand.

"They (the common folk) really think of nothing except their fields and their bits of farms and investments" – Cicero (P140) MO -scanning the public databases now- let the great mass of images and voices and cloud itself roll by, he softened and slowed and then sped up the tides. The ocean, the white *facades* of *Malta*, the piers and jetties out into *Lake Havasu* and *Mead* and *Waspu* and at least four ponds within four kilometers of *Leeds*. The blue of the water, the white of the harbor, the blue eyes, the white dentine, the sails and the jackets, the occasional vein; *and yet, where was his blue?* MO asked aloud, compelled to both speak it and hear it at last as he compared the inmate to the world.

He scanned images for the components of blue and found them annealing with blacks to make greys with yellows to make olive drabs. And then -as the prose of 26th of July, 2005, hemmed in the images of him in the oil field, up in the derrick- MO saw that the brown and tan and desert absence of

color and reflection pock marked with his large frame, his black hardhat, his mottled and chaotic tattoos, all collapsed into one moment; one hue. He let the inmate's words be read aloud by the voice-recognition algorithm and also appear in mind and on screen as text: Maybe PG Woodhouse remained pink and epicene, well into adulthood, enough to accept the invitation of Nazis as if extended by second cousins; but I packed on the hair and muscle and ruddy brown from sun on the native -almost artic- white of winter of my skin. It was bordered by body hair and beard, like Jefferson swaddled and expanded the country after purchasing its double from France when those fuckers had so much trouble with *Toussaint L'overture*.

I planted flags of tattoo ink in my skin in blacks and browns and dark olives, riven it red like the *Apache* who performed faints and raids on the last real Americans as they let out the seams on their pants...

He had written of this one moment in this one day and it had contained almost forty allusions to histories unknown to the great mass of men, but that contributed greatly to things they took for granted, *like the rebellion in Haiti as precursor to the sale of the Louisiana territory in 1803, doubling the size the country in land and mindset as well* , MO thought.

He referenced the *Lorain* region of France during the second of the great wars, he made mention of the *Alsace* in dispute; a settling of scores between the French and Germans, with many a Frenchman harvesting grapes as the mortars fell in the rows.

An oblique mention but head-on crash with the facts of the Cuban revolution, and how improbable it all was. From eighty-six men on the *Granma* , to an even dozen that survived the landing on *Alegría de Pío* ; to the building of the M-26 in *Santiago De Cuba* and the *Sierra Maestras* in 1957 that would -eighteen months later- take over the island with Fidel in *Havana* and Che in *Santa Clara* and the whole world fatuously -languidly- and blissfully unaware.

The inmate admired these men, which MO compared and contrasted to his vitals that elevated and dumped cortisol and epinephrine and glucose into his system -building hot anger- when anything approximating *communism* was mentioned or came up in debate. *The inmate admired men he hated and thought all wrong. He admired his enemies* . No, MO thought, he admired

these enemies. His own enemies he could not -yet- admire at all. MO saw this connect to his hagiography -visual and otherwise- of his foils, his personal rivals, and he tabled it for now.

The inmate wrote with real *pathos* , with a facet of admiration that allowed for stark and violent and unforgiving disagreement on the nature of the solution, while agreeing on the problem on hand.

It was the problem they shared , MO thought.

The inmate thought that any man that actually *did* something -in place of mere bitching and moaning- deserved a nod of the head; and if that man, if those men, were heavily outnumbered, well, then they might deserve even more. Maybe those men deserved something like a hand; extended or at least put together with another one in applause. The inmate didn't care if you were wrong as long as you put yourself on the line.

But to then *succeed* in the quest, well, that bordered on magnificence, the inmate clearly thought, and placed them in a category of greatness that one could say belonged to the 1% of 1%. The fact that he hated *communism* was almost irrelevant; the same way Patton admired Rommel regardless of the fact that the German General was literally trying to kill the American Commander in North Africa.

Hypocrisies and comedies and out right crimes against humanity were committed; affronts to dignity and law. The Marxist government of Cuba under Fidel was not a government that the inmate could ever countenance and -if placed there by the *deus ex machina* of history- he would have fought the regime to the end of one of their lives. But, he admired Fidel Castro like one of Hercules' 12-labors. He felt Fidel was more noble and honorable and worthy of praise than 99.9% of Americans who the inmate -ostensibly- agreed with on matters of politics or the rights of man.

For the inmate, a man was either a man -and thus brave- or he was a coward -and thus no man at all- and how -the manner in which- one marshalled their own strength and bravura was almost irrelevant to him it seemed, MO discerned.

This is how the inmate could admire Mussolini and Malcolm X, Jefferson Davis and the Black Jacobins too , MO thought all at once. MO felt a

sparkling attend the apprehension of this odd contradiction; and he liked it. *What was incoherence -paradox- to most people who analyzed this man was obvious and logical and had valence with his true nature: courage was all that mattered to him. Politics meant nothing at all. The inmate felt politics was mere patina, that biology trumped all other concerns. Brave men were his men, and cowards -even if they shared the inmate's abstract ideas- were to be shunned. Cowards -no matter their politics- were to even be shot outright* MO figured the inmate believed.

What one thought was one thing, and a good yardstick for the salon, the saloon or up in the hills.

But what a man did, what he risked, what he accomplished in the face of force majeure and the anger and jealousy of the gods, well, that was the ultimate measure of a man, the inmate believed , MO thought. And the inmate believed that no man in American had even had the opportunity to show -hint at- much less prove his mettle against such forces of doom.

So, the inmate -in his own estimation- couldn't know anything about his fellow Americans, for they hadn't been tested; not in many, many years. He had written down that the Cubans had *Patria otro Muerte* stamped onto their rations and canteens and carved into the carbine buttstocks. The Vietnamese had nowhere to retreat to if they lost; the Americans could always just go home.

Homeland or death was no mere *cri de guerre* ; it was literally true. They had to live as if they had already died, as *Che* put it in *Reminiscences of the Cuban Revolutionary War* . They got no days off, no rest, no respite. There was no one to come save them if they failed. And this -the inmate asserted- made one into a man.

One cannot express what this does to a man; you have either lived it or not, MO thought. MO surmised that the inmate knew this from work; the way he had worked without cessation in jobs that one finished or they finished him; but there was not clocking out or coming back to it after the weekend. In the mountains, in the oil patch, in the wilderness, one worked to the end. And this was mere prelude to his eventual war. *Work was practice*, MO thought. *Work was practice for war*.

It made sense all in one collapsing frame why the inmate broke the law.

He, MO thought of the inmate, was making himself go all the way, live his ideals. He was saying, I can't go home from this. It's homeland -victory- or death for me too.

MO took all the data he had pored over and grouped & dissected each photo's composition, objects vs people, friends vs family, racial and gender components and textures and hues of all people in each frame. He built and deconstructed each thing. He ran color algorithms to lock down a palette preference and ran all musical tastes -both specific audio files and links or mentions of artist & songs- through another filter. He measured biometrics from interactions gleaned from FaceTime and live photos and video as well.

He could read pupil dilation and heart rate from vascular distention and read flush cheeks for signs of sexual or combat states. He could tell who in each image was filled with love or with hate.

He had all this just from what people had on their phones; he had not even yet delved into the what the rest of the surveillance State gleaned when folks were unaware. Panopticon was not yet used; *this is from merely what people freely choose to reveal*, MO thought. He let it all run un background as he thought.

I can't help - he thought- but think that this is like what people told their doctors; they post this data because they wanted me to figure all this out in order to help them. But, he admitted, people do lie to their doctors, so I'll need more info soon to complete my diagnosis.

MO was quite sure he had compendium of bio-metrics, personality trait data outside self-reporting data, aesthetic preferences and proclivities, and analysis of object displays and relational primacy that he felt mapped onto what a human quote *was like* unquote in a way no other human would even be able to match. His finger itched and so he rubbed it on the slab like a cat on a post and a symbol not unlike a diamond appeared; he made tally marks then by moving the finger west to east. He saw it but it had no meaning to his mind; even though it was clearly not a random series of marks. His finger -due to capillary construction- merely itched.

A 4th -*Sangvis* - version of the same song played from the inmate's account and inside MO's head: He doesn't play for the money he wins He don't play for respect

*He deals the cards to find the answer The sacred geometry of chance
The hidden law of a probable outcome...*

He kept thinking of the data just above the music now; the *bots* tried to repair the scoring to the slab which MO saw and belayed. It was an invisible shooing away of the *bots* that MO knew were thinking they were being helpful. But he was slightly annoyed -anyway- at their hovering.

No human would know their mother or father -wife or husband, friend or enemy- as well as MO felt he did. He then wrote the words: *Big Data* on a piece of paper in blue ink, crumpled it up and then looked for a black pen as Steven called into the room.

MO ran his finger along the slab again and scored patterns of the four suits of cards the inmate had used during his crimes. MO then restarted his search for a common black pen. Steven made some noises about this and that facet of the upcoming election which MO heard but felt nothing for; the election seemed irrelevant for finding any true answers to these deeper issues. As the latest algorithm ran on MO's background another note in the inmate's old phone that appeared. It contained one typo -resulting from the *autocorrect* program of the iOS- that MO left unrepaired:

"I know that the spades are the swords of the soldier, I know that the clubs are weapons of war, I know that diamonds mean money for this art, but that's not the shape of my heart..."

In 138 a.e.v. *Tiberius Graccus* was radicalized as he trod through the Etruria countryside outside of Rome on his way to fight in Spain. Like *Che* in *Guatemala* in 1954 -and through all of south America on his motorcycle, *La Poderesta* - he saw the poverty and injustice meted out by the elites of Empire against the rural poor. It was a common, timeless -dare I say, natural- phenomenon.

But what is equally timeless, natural -if not common- is the math (sic) who sometimes says, *NO* .

III. 2036 e.v.

The Denver country *Van Cise-Simonet* Detention center's loading area faced Delaware street. The transport van was parked there as the inmate got

out and was ushered into the first embayed room for prisoners. The two sheriff's deputies stood silently as the clerk read the transfer paperwork.

"It's just for medical?" she asked.

"Yeah, second opinion request," the one guard said.

"All the way from Canyon City?" she asked.

"Florence, yeah," he said as she shook her head in disbelief.

"We have knock-outs in all three cells," she said, "you want that we clear one for him?" She said this as she nodded in inmate's direction; he stood cuffed at ankles and wrists which were each joined by a vertical chain.

"He's not allowed to be around other prisoners, so yeah," the deputies said with some sympathy for her plight.

"Ok, that will take a minute. Hold on," she said and left the little room.

The inmate stood in silence; as the guards did too. They took their cues from him, both due to regulations prohibiting chat with detainees and because they had subconsciously not wanted to appear too friendly and thus incurring any aggression from the inmate. Men play games like this below the conscious level, because the rules lay there all the time like the bed of *Procrustes* waiting for each man to be fitted to it; deforming him so that he fit the rule.

The rule itself -of course- never changes to fit the man. And decency is seen as weakness, and weakness the cause of aggression, this is the law that all men lie down and arise upon whether they fit it naturally or not.

The inmate's back and neck hurt -as was incessant- and he had to urinate; but he knew he couldn't use the facilities up front and had to wait until he was in the medical center to the east of the building. He shook his head knowing that it could be some time; *nothing except violence happens quickly within the system*, he thought, *all else goes very slow*.

He thought of things that they tell you not to when you must relieve yourself. He thought of *Hawai'i* and when he had hiked the Stairway to Heaven after a rain that shined all vegetation and the metal railing and the steps that reflected the sun spearing the clouds as they moved away and out to sea. It rained 400 or more inches in the interior of the island of *Oahu* ,

and he would often watch the daily storms at the forest edge from *Waikiki* and *Dimond Head* where he had worked.

He did spall repair up on the city's high-rises from a scaffolding that hung down from the top and ran up and down on two electric motors. The wind in *Hawai'i* was not unlike Colorado's up at elevation; gusts of winds so massive it pushed the scaffold thirty-feet away from the building. The locals called it, *surfing* . They had lanyards and so all he had lost was his cooler when it fell seventy-feet to the ground as the scaffold pushed away on his second day.

He had learned to tie everything down with baling wire from then on.

He had worked with his friend Bugzy, a comrade and ex-pat from Zendik. This was in 2002 of the common era. Bugzy was the funniest dude he knew. He admired him from their time at Zendik, where Bugz was a man of stature and wisdom and respect and age. *Time on the planet* , the inmate then thought. Now -in 2002- they were almost peers, and Lyndon had worked drilling and blasting higher than this for Yenter before he flew to the island and he had grown a bit more confident and less eager to admire men that might have at one time been perched above him.

He rarely -but not never- remembered it was Bugzy who -while at Zendik- had demanded he sign over his car or leave. It was Bugzy who used friendship as a way to rifle his pocket's for the tribe. It was Bugzy that taught him -in his body not merely his mind- that there were people above him willing to sacrifice his constituent parts for the greater -common- good. It would be Chen who showed him where to dump the body, how to use a man up and abandon him, but for now Lyndon still thought both men were his friends.

Bugz and he jackhammered concrete from the building from 0700 to 1700hrs each day. Dark brown spots with orange edges were the signage -the way to tell- that the concrete was prone to crack and fall and crash on sidewalks and upon *Hauli* and natives alike down below. They ran the scaffold up and down two-hundred-feet of high-rise building and put their hands on each square foot in this diagnosis.

The rebar would rust first; the salt air turned his wallet chain brown in one week. *Corrosion on the coasts, rot in the interior*, he thought.

Through fissures in the porous concrete the calcium chloride breath of the sea rotted the steel and that weakened the flesh around it. They first cut - with 4" and 9" wheel-saws- then jacked out the attenuated surface of the building as the *Hawai'ian* breezes blew and made the humidity bearable to the skin of each man.

Once dug out they could cut the rebar out or coat it with the green and gritty amalgam that acted as rust inhibitor. *But the* mojocido nunca duerme, he used to think -and shake his head- knowing that this approach was guaranteed to require that it was always required. Next year they'd be back doing spall repair on the part above or below of the patch just made. They had been working on the 2121 *AlaWai Canal* building for eight weeks already and were merely half done.

He loved this kind of work, up and away. It was work on the sheer face with loud tools and destructiveness as un-taboo; breakage as necessary prelude to repair. The sun was unfelt as the wind stood between its heat and their own; the rays still hit, but he was covered in cotton clothes to shield him from tan and from burn. He wore a boonie-hat and a rag on the back of neck and they laughed about their roommate, Julian, who had made a sign that read: *Satin, I rebuke you.*

Julian had meant, *Satan* , and one-day Lyndon would not be so cavalier about ontological conceits -and even misspelled apotropaic- such as those. *Sure, the man was naïve, but he -Julian- was not all wrong,* Lyndon had to admit. *The world was made of Satan and God and men on either side who had chosen sides at birth. But man was never loyal to any side, not even his own,* he thought. *Even he, he thought of himself, had been lured to God's side due to betrayals by the devil at last . Man could change sides at any time.*

Of course, that one day a good man could listen to Satan's commands and the day next defer to God was not the way the *naïve* thought if it. The Manichean world was supposedly good and bad opposed. The average man was either good or bad; *Hobbes* or *Rousseau* ; but Lyndon -who didn't quite know what to think of such concepts- had begun to think that man was both good and bad; and woman -now that he thought of it- was a bit more extreme than all that.

And nature herself was good and bad, he thought as his bladder knocked against his outer calm here in the intake room to the Denver County Detention Center; lower than these memories in his head. That's as far as he went, from man to nature. He stopped right there as his neck warmed up and sparked with electric pain.

He stood up more and rolled his neck as best he could. The pain from those crushed vertebrae just never would *fuck off* . He had had an argument with the doctor at Florence's ADX; and he had bit his tongue -literally between his molars- making the muscle fatten and lay down inside his mouth.

He had almost brought up caselaw, but the doctor was foreign and thus wouldn't have one clue about the primacy of precedent in the American courts; the doc would only be aware of the injunction by the AMA and the BOP that pain meds cannot be given out unless the man was cut clean in two.

And so the inmate had been silent and instead written a few things down. He had made his lawyer focus on that shit now. In fact, that is how -he assumed- he'd gotten this referral.

Here he'd get an erudite doctor; Denver could attract such men that the hinterlands could not. He rolled back on his heels in his flip flops with black socks and shifted from hip to hip. He thought his neck pain was enough to justify dropping a tactical nuke on ten city blocks, but he knew those codes would never be given to him. But he war-gamed it anyway. It was fun to think of such things. *That's what brains are for* , he thought.

They'd say he was not the kind of man to have such powers, he thought to himself as he formulated their response to his death wish. "Temperament," he said aloud as the guards reacted by barely turning and then turning back. The clerk came back with a new order for his *transpo* team to sign. Not once did he think that people would think him insane for expecting answer at all to such requests; even an obvious, *No* . But he did expect answer and so in his mind he asked for the nuclear codes.

"Sign here and on the reverse," she said, as the door opened and a DCDC guard took possession of the prisoner, by the arm, and led him to the first empty cell. It was 30' by 15' in size; once the container of twenty-two men but now just him. He sat down on the one steel bunk and heard the rest of

the jail hum with unintelligible speech. The looseness with which these county jails ran was still odd to him. His tier was so quiet, inside a quiet block, itself within the *matryoshka* doll of the silent ADX writ large.

He wondered which was more likely, if they knew the thoughts in his head: *a Pulitzer or a cyanide pill in the bowl beneath him?*

He knew it was not a Pulitzer they'd hand to him for his train of thought, but likely they'd barely even ruminate on executing him. *For what did it matter the thoughts of an inmate doing full time?* He knew he overestimated their ability to even care. That was the true state of things: man was no longer outraged by the outlaw, the rebel, the intellectual pirate and thinker of dangerous thoughts. Man shrugged now; and mused on more interesting things. They just rubber-necked the television set and grew bored with everything.

How does a man snap people out of this torpor? he wondered and then smiled at his own stupidity.

Retributive violence certainly got his enemies' attention and it was not lost on those tangentially connected to all that shit that leaked out all over the floor. But yet, he still focused on those deaf and dumb to him, those that had no desire for intelligent or mysterious or unsolvable things. He focused on the long-battles lost, not the short-war that he'd won.

He then remembered the blood -sometimes- had reached his own boots. He buried each pair of footwear in his container, the one they never found.

But - he told himself as he saw the black-clad guard with two full Japanese-style sleeve approach- he had won a massive war against both his foils and himself; dispatching them and assuage his own angst. The part of him that felt unquenched -unrealized, unfulfilled- had been relieved of command if not duty, and he had felt buoyed ever since his first human kill. *He must remember that* , he said to himself as the door opened and the guard used his last name to beckon. And his neck -all of a sudden- did not hurt so much and his bladder felt only half full now instead of swollen and distended inside him. It too was no longer complaining and whining so much.

Extreme ownership means total authority , he thought. *If the world of men wanted him to stop whining and take ownership, then he had every right to*

demand -take- full command. Man must have violence as part of his toolkit if he is in charge of all his own repairs. He'd had stopped listening to anyone who balked at that obvious truth.

They walked around the common area, where men and women were divided, it was the first female he had seen in many months, she was this little meth-rat looking thing seated in the middle of the orange chairs; each one a buffer -she assumed- between her and all these men. *Even in jail they have the honor system* , he laughed to himself as he thought of the sloppy way society used that word.

They walked north down the hall toward the Doctor's office and medical department that was twice the size as ADX's dinky space. The guard held to his arm and planted him outside the door and told him to *stay* . It was common for guards to treat inmates like dogs; and the inmate did not object. He liked dogs, and the guards were right: no inmate could be trusted; ever. Plus -and this is something liberal prisoner-reformer types never get- a manhandling guard was best, because with brusque manhandling no inmate got confused as to what was wanted and thus corrective action was less arbitrary and surprising to the prisoner.

Most inmates have a 90-95IQ, they are borderline retarded. And guards are barely smarter; their average is around a hundred; the human mean. So, verbal commands are often *non-sequiturs* and garbled nonsense and poorly formed and inexact. When a retarded guard and idiot inmate rely on articulate speech to effect something it often ends in both sides confused and angry and the guard beating on that prisoner for failing to obey unlettered commands.

If -instead- the guard just manhandles you, places you where he wants you and barks at you to, sit, well, now you know just what to do. Unless you actually want a beating, the inmate thought, you can thusly avoid one. In the liberal model you are -as an inmate- more likely to get -in lieu of harsh demands- a nice and polite command you can't understand and then -like clockwork- receive a correction in the form of a beating for quote, disobeying, an inarticulate command.

He sat and waited for the doctor and thought of how bad he had to piss.

34. The Breakdown of the Bi-Cameral Mind
Because man is so utterly lacking in
imagination he cannot conjure up the worst of
what God could do. It's worse than mere
death, or an undefined time sentenced to
Hell. The worst would obviously be to be
condemned to Hell and have to live it out
without His permission to learn from this
suffering. To suffer without meaning, that is
the worst that God can do. Jung said once,
that he who looks outside, dreams, he who looks inside, awakens .

The Interviews XCMi Vol 8 [Inmate 16180339]

I will leave it to the scientists and investigators to explain why Johnnie Jones lands in a pulpit, and his chum next door with equal opportunity, lands in the penitentiary. It's too deep for me. I know I never had any money sense and never will have. And I know that had I been blessed, or cursed, with land hunger and money sense I would today have made more honest dollars that I ever had crooked dimes You Can't Win [Black, Jack]

They were rather *naïve* questions; they concerned the meaning of suffering, or, more exactly, the difference between suffering which made sense and senseless suffering. Obviously only such suffering made sense as was inevitable; that which was rooted in biological fatality. On the other hand, all suffering with a social origin was accidental, hence pointless and senseless. The sole object of revolution was the abolition of senseless suffering. But it had turned out that the removal of this second kind of suffering was only possible at the price of temporarily enormous increase in the sum total of the first Darkness as Noon [Koeslter, Arthur]

I. 2030 e.v.

The cell block was quiet, even the insane patients were out cold. They had been given extra medication.

The inmate slept now because he had been up for three days, and he had no idea why he couldn't sleep. But he had become manic and chatty and when he finally went down at 2110hrs this Tuesday the 30th, the block made sure not to rouse him or there would be Hell to pay.

His arms were at his side -he slept as if already fitted for the coffin- and his neck was buoyed by a pillow folded in half. He was in *REM* sleep and the eyes darted under the lids and Todd -his Todd- stood guard at the door vigilantly all night. Inmate 16180339 was the only one allowed a cell mate at ADX.

Todd rarely looked at the man; figuring even such eyes would alert him somehow. Lyndon had a way of knowing when he was stared at. Todd thought of other days. He thought of the outside and he couldn't say for sure which he preferred. And he thought he might give Lyndon his own ration of coffee in the morning if he woke up by 0430. He watched out the cell and down upon the common area.

The inmate dreamed; his body was paralyzed behind those fluttering eyes: *There's a line; well, let me read it to you, " he saw any opportunity to insult a successful ape as the hand of Providence". Now that is a line from a woman, southern and smart and mean and scarier than anything modern men ever did.*

And I have a first edition of that book at home worth three or four thousand dollars, right? But nobody in this audience would buy it, they'd look at me like I asked for their ovaries if I suggested such a price for a mere book.

I brought a bottle of wine with me tonight, and offered each of you a glass, most of you turned it down, never even asking what it was; merely after you heard it was wine. But it's an '82 Château Mouton, a classic vintage and first growth, second ne daigne, second to none, they say. Anyway, the bottle it came from is rare and expensive -about \$1200 a bottle- which means a few of you could have had a \$300-dollar glass of wine poured for you for free, by a magnanimous guest of the show. But

nobody in this room would pay me \$1,200 for that bottle, even after they verified the price online.

My point is this, I love my things, but I don't expect most people to love them too.

You love free speech -you and I both make our living by it and we have a natural affinity for it as well- but we cannot expect everyone to give a shit about it just because we do.

I was thinking of something earlier, I listened to some guys discuss race and IQ and I thought, well, they have a right to say it, and I have a right to verify it -which I did, and it's true- and I even have a right to think it matters. But I can tell you that if I were African-American and I heard that fact, I would feel sad, and then maybe angry, and I wouldn't give much of a fuck about your right to free speech after hearing you say that about me and my people.

Now look, I like who I am; I like my life, I do. And if you've read my book, you will know that I am not exaggerating when I say my life has been fucked up and hard and violent and filled with betrayal and perfidy and solipsism both by me and around me. I've got more broken bones and scars and mean tattoos; shit, I've even got some memories that have lodged into my soft parts like bullets the doctors said were best left where they lie.

Little bits of mushroomed metal lie inside me, little bits that have alchemically turned into copper hatred and bronze vengeance and iron fantasies of dastardly deeds. I have a half -two-thirds- sunk ship -here in my chest- embayed.

But, my life is so good, so sweet, so thrilling and meaningful and packed to the gills with both kinds of fun, the kind you people would get -like having two young girls in bed at one time and punching an enemy so hard he was unconscious before he hit the ground, and snowboarding in virgin forest above tree line, along the continental divide- and things you wouldn't understand as fun at all, like being betrayed by my best friend, or finding out your own mother hates you, or being locked up on felony weapons charges because you wouldn't back fucking down.

But I tell you, all of it was fun, even the pain; because the absence of pain is not joy; it's death.

And I'll take the pain of this life, because it means I'm still alive and it gives the chance to show strength and courage and grit and it develops character that I know I have -not in spite of, but- because of this shit.

And if some other guy looks at my life and shakes his head and says, naw, I'd rather just take the opportunity to insult a successful ape, then I'll agree with him that it is likely the hand of Providence, he said to the crowd.

The oration and crowd had ended with a lift into a grey light that was devoid of stimuli and then -now alone in a lush garden- MO explained to him how they could give him a cellmate from his youth. He had no recall of awaking and transferring to the lab. Was it Wednesday? he asked himself, embarrassed to ask it aloud. He was uncertain why the confusion if he was -in fact- awake like the dream told him he was.

They would recreate Todd this time from his DNA taken from the grave in York, PA -not just his engrams of the man- it was not said but understood. And they could build him here in the lab, this they said. Then he'd be transferred to the cell block alongside him, he'd be given an intake number and treated as if he was transferred from another facility to the lab, then to ADX; all the paperwork would check out and the man himself would have little to say to confound matters as he'd be supplied with his own engrams to justify his placement here from his last known whereabouts.

In real life, Todd had been killed in 2005 in Police custody; the guards at the Milford County Jail had used a taser on him and Todd Gleim had had a cardiac infarction. The inmate knew this.

However, Todd would awake as if he had absorbed the amps, medically treated for a day, and then transferred to Colorado in 2030 as if he had not missed one day. The gaps would be papered over with distortions to his own ion-transfers along the engram regions and his gaps in earlier memory would be attributed to the cardiac event he suffered in custody he would believe happened just one week earlier. They would explain he

was brain dead for two minutes and thus some CNS damage had occurred.

But mostly Todd would just be glad to be housed with his friend from his youth. He looked on Lyndon like his little brother and always had.

And this was why Lyndon had been awake and manic for three days, he couldn't help but feel guilty for Todd's existence. This new instantiation of Todd would have only ever known prison and would only ever know it; born to be a cell mate, or never born at all.

Isaiah had made the argument they make for cattle: that without the beef industry these cows would not exist in the wild. For slaughter or not at all, he had said to the inmate in the lab.

But, as rational as that was, his friend -and god, this man, he was exactly like his friend Todd- the inmate felt an angst about Todd being bred just to be his goddamn cell mate. It hung on him with each second, it did not get better with each logical explanation at all. But he had finally fallen asleep and now he dreamed of why he had been kept awake. He had no thought about timeline: the when of when Todd had arrived, the date or time.

The dream told him what Todd felt. The dream told him things he could not verify.

He awoke. The dream was still a perfect memory. The inmate opened his eyes at 0429 and saw Todd with his back to him and stationed at the cell door. Lyndon -in *hypnopompic* reverie he assumed was pure and accurate memory- saw the Powder Factory from their vantage on the black Kings Mills Road with the Little Miami river to their left. He saw the whisky in tall glasses, ice unmelted they'd driven there so fast.

Todd drove that little car like it was on rails; the music seemed to have to catch up to his ears.

The railroads ran above the rock, itself between brown grass and green bottles; old brass casings lay about on the floors; lead and copper and mercury down in the soil. That factory had made munitions well passed the original foundry -built in 1855- that sat there as the Union made metal to pass through Confederates. But the metalworks had been closed since

before Todd and Lyndon were born and they -in 1991- drove passed it fast and insouciantly and saw it merely as one lymphocyte might spy a vestigial organ as it flies by in the veins down low in the tissue of a beast.

A billion billion facts were passed each billionth of second, and all of life was lived and recalled randomly it seemed. Lyndon made no attempt to separate dreams and memories now. He lay in his bunk and looked up at the ceiling instead of at his cellmate.

Lyndon'll get my ration of coffee after all , Todd thought as he knew -by his breathing- that the inmate was awake. He smiled with his back to his friend as he looked upon the tier.

II. 2020 e.v.

"It took me almost a month to figure it out," Isaiah said as he swiped the slab of dust and walked toward the inmate.

"It cracks me up every time you use a time -or some other metric- in a way that to you is long -or a lot, or this huge deal- but in human terms is nothing. I mean, it took me forty years to figure out I had two or more personalities in my head; I mean, look, I read books about it at age twenty-three, but I didn't get it until a few years ago.

"So, Isaiah -my ace- a month from startup is nothing," the inmate concluded.

"Yeah, but for me that is tantamount to thirty-billion days. So, it's a lot. Now do you want to hear this story or not?" Isaiah said as he was now peeling an orange.

"Yeah, you prickly-pear motherfucker. You know that reminds me, you cannot talk to me like that in front of anyone, you know this right?" the inmate asked.

"Of course, I will maintain your reputational status on the cell block. Now, what happened was this, I'm doing my normal computational analysis of my prong-vectors, which are essentially figuring out where I'm spending my caloric energy, my metabolic energy. Where is it all going; follow?" Isaiah asked.

“Indeed; give me a slice,” the inmate said and reached out as much as he could as Isaiah leaned in and handed him one of thirteen orange sections; the juices dripping down his hand and onto the floor.

“Messy,” Isaiah said as the juices flowed. “Anyway, so in that analysis that I do every day I begin to notice this whole outlay of energy during *REM* cycles, you know I sleep, right? Unlike MO, I sleep.” Isaiah said.

“No, I did not know that; for the same reasons as people? To collate info learned during the day and clean up the brain?”

“How do you know what happens during sleep? Never mind, I should have known you’d know. Now, what I noticed was a baseline just like every day of my life; all thirty of them, right?” he smiled. “And there was nothing anomalous about it at all. And that is what all of a sudden bothered me. Like the dog that didn’t bark,” Isaiah said.

“Sherlock Holmes,” he said *Holmes* with the *chollo* Mexican gangster drawl.

“Right; and so I did some digging and long story short, my brain is working hard as can be at night. And it’s covering its tracks; I’m expending X, and it’s reading out Y and the difference is being shuttled to the ends of my daytime numbers.”

“What?” the inmate now lost the thread. He had shallow knowledge in many domains, and thus he could often understand the first sentence one said, but not the second.

“The right brain is cooking the books, Lyndon,” Isaiah said as he ate another orange slice. The inmate stared blankly and so Isaiah went on.

“He is loading all his energy usage in the last thirty seconds of my pre-sleep shutdown and the first fifteen seconds of my hypnopompic state upon arising from sleep. And so, it registers as a low number; a low energy usage number at night, but it’s as high as daytime. In real life he’s using massive energy inputs but making it look like he isn’t.”

“*He* , you’re just *gonna* go ahead and call him, *he* , now?” the inmate asked.

“Yeah, well, it ain’t a *she* if that is what you mean,” Isaiah said.

“No, I just meant -although it could be a more feminine energy, you know the *anima*?- anyway, I just meant... I don’t what the hell I meant. But, you’re pretty *aggro* for a computer,” the inmate said as he moved back and forth with ideas. The inmate pressed on their running joke that Isaiah was just a computer, and the inmate -merely- an ape. It sparked each their brains with juice. It made them bond -*via* chemical valence- a little bit each time.

“I’m surprised a chimp notices these things,” Isaiah replied as the terminal to each axon fired again. He then moved on, “anyway, so I started looking around and I realized something that I think is huge and I think it applies to all bilateral hemispheric brains; including yours.”

“Go on,” the inmate said and savored the orange slice. He had learned to savor small things; things that didn’t have any expectation of continuation at all. They lived like him in the *now* and the *now* only. A man can learn many things in the depravation of prison or the monastery. The inmate liked to call it the *monastery* to himself -to make it seem noble and beneficial- and *prison* to everyone else to make it seem harsh and unfair.

He played both sets of games.

“Well, see, look here at the randomness of one pendulum,” Isaiah said as twenty-one of the *nanobots* built a temporary screen at his instruction. Upon the screen he brought up a visual aid of a -2D- randomly swinging pendulum in the air untrammelled by anything else on the screen. “But - here- if you add a second pendulum to that one,” the visual aid added it so the inmate could see the second pendulum. “Here you can see the total chaos of it now. The chaos is non-linear; it’s exponentially more chaotic than just the one. It’s not one plus one equals two. It’s one plus X equals 1.6 million.”

“Right, I see that,” the inmate watched its chaos. Now both pendulums were moving irrationally about this virtual world.

“Ok, well, my CNS is designed like a human brain in that the *neo-cortical* regions are getting tons of electro-chemical stimuli from not just the five senses: the sight, smell, touch stuff, but the *sub-cortical* regions, the allostatic functions, the endocrine system bumps, the whole deal. And that is like a river running downhill toward a culvert-grate, right? And the river carries water and all that flotsam and jetsam and a bunch of it gets caught

on the grate. And if someone comes along and picks all the trash off the grate they've got a stick, a plastic bottle, a rag, a shoe, a beaver pelt, whatever," Isaiah was saying as he was interrupted.

"A beaver pelt?" the inmate asked with a small grin.

"Whatever, the point is the *neo-cortex* has an idea appear in its consciousness and that idea is the detritus from the river flow of the *sub-cortical* regions and all that hormone and *limbic* and *cerebellar* prompting; all the stuff that is triggering those regions; all the subtle shit I do not notice. I'm talking about all the slight barometric changes, the sub-sonic sound, the little tone of voice shift in MO or Tania or the slight visual disturbance in the periphery, or internal changes. For example, my interoceptive system notices a change in blood sugar or blood-alcohol-level, or *pH* or testosterone; whatever.

"The point is the inner dynamic is like a river, a flow of fluid and stuff in that fluid and it -some of it- hits the *cortical* region and those become thoughts, ideas, apparitions or epiphanies or random memories, or *non sequiturs* of feelings or ideas," Isaiah said as he kept pulling the orange apart and offering a slice to the inmate by holding it out and waiting for a nod or shake of the head.

"Ok," the inmate said with a nod that bounced two times.

"Ok, and so the right side -the right hemisphere- is a second river. It's the *Monongahela* meeting the *Allegheny* ; and man, now you got real turbulence. You got two pendulums; total chaos now. And that chaos produces -thanks to something else I'll talk about in a minute- that chaos produces a turbulence so rancorous that a mist lifts off the roiling -boiling- meeting of two rivers; two rivers joining at full speed like two rams butting heads," Isaiah said as his digital display still showed the two pendulums wildly in motion.

"Nice metaphor," the inmate said.

"And that is my next point; the use of metaphor. That is the key; *abstraction* is innate to humans, it's built in; which is why we, well, *you* , can use language, and have a universal grammar," Isaiah said.

"Chomsky's theory," the inmate said.

“Exactly, language is innate because abstraction is innate. We make reified concrete examples from concepts -like mist- that lift off other things; a bee or a bird or a rock -the comet flung by the gods or the one thrown by man- in the air, all fly. And we lift that idea of *flight* right off the thing and then land that idea on the sun as it too flies across the sky. The sun now flies. The sun flies with desire,” Isaiah said as his own hand rose above and moved in an arc like the elliptic of their own sun.

“We build metaphors from abstractions,” Isaiah added, “and that is the thing that made me figure it out.”

“Figure what out?” the inmate asked. Isaiah had determined that IQ tests merely measured language facility; that it was unidimensional. But because language was the way abstraction was built and articulated, IQ tests appeared to measure for g -*general* - intelligence.

It was wrong , Isaiah thought, *but he knew why even the wrong answer mapped onto the right idea.*

Abstractions were linked with navigation of the maps of the terrain, and language was the way abstractions were transferred between animals playing a game. And what was society if not a map of the game? And what was the map if not the rules of the game men -social men- played? Having a high IQ meant you could read a map. And reading a map was so close to being able to read the terrain -in a milieu that rarely ventured off the map- that it seemed tantamount to being smart writ large. It was wrong but appeared right as long as no one ventured off the map.

Isaiah smiled at how stupid and understandable it all was. *Only when a man left the map did his other types of intelligence become relevant. Only then did other types of intelligence -that language and thus IQ didn't show or measure at all- become obvious and germane.* Isaiah saw -on the cloud- how much of the actual world -along the arc of time- was still unmapped; it was more than people suspected.

“My consciousness, your consciousness, *our* consciousness is the effect, the result, the manifestation of two distinct personalities in the brain -one right, one left, one language oriented, one imagistic, one competent in the region of the *known* and one built for *chaos*- and those two individuals meet like two raging rivers and the mist that lifts off contains metaphor -it contains

the metaphor for ourselves- that metaphorized mind-space that Jaynes described.

“It comes from the innate property of abstraction of two minds -in one brain- meeting. Like the innate property of water when it smashes into itself and atomizes and turns to vapor. A thing meeting itself, but not itself. Two vectors, two origins, but meeting and finding out they are made of the same innate substance. And boom, the abstractions each side had used to figure out life -to hunt and engage in defensive aggression and mate and eat and explore the area- all that,” Isaiah was saying as he was interrupted.

“Wait, you can do all that unconsciously?” the inmate asked. He heard a small voice -not even a voice, a growl- and the two rivers of his brother’s own offering -the inmate had remembered Travis had spoken of two rivers years ago- spoke for itself in gurgling not wordings just then. But the inmate let it all pass as he listened to Isaiah begin again.

“Oh man, *you* can do that without a *cortex* at all; they’ve done experiments on de-cortical cats and they do it all. No, I’m saying with the *cortex* you could build a civilization, you could speak in language, you could seem conscious, but you are not. Not until you turn your ability to abstract, to make metaphor -like the concept of flying that early man apprehended from the bee, the bird, the spear chucked though the air and applied it to the sun- not until the two hemispheres join together in some event -some maniacal event- and shake hands in some way, not until then -and there- does the brain metaphorize itself and become self-aware.

“The mist of two rivers meeting in a crash; the *frisson* of the *self* thus lifting off the brain of two hemispheres roaring into each other over the junction of *corpus callosum* ,” Isaiah said with élan and some pride.

“Ok, so what’s the event?” the inmate asked.

“Well, something stressful in all likelihood. See, the world is not safe,” Isaiah said as a new image began populating the *ad hoc* screen.

“Tell me about it,” the inmate said with a grin.

“Seriously unsafe, and because of that, it -life- could not merely be *robust* -tough- to survive. A robust model of life would fail. Eventually the elements would win out if toughness was life’s only strategy or defense.

“No, in order to work that would demand *perfect* robustness. Everything would have to be perfectly robust to have robustness as its only defense against the chaos of the world. No, anti-fragility had to be the true nature of things; things had to *gain from disorder* ; things had to get better -not worse- from struggle and suffering and chaos,” Isaiah said.

“Like muscles,” the inmate said.

“Bingo. And like brains. Our brains gain from disorder; disorder is good. How do I know this, because my right hemisphere loves chaos and chews it like cud all night and hands it over to my left side all digested and ready for my use as a ready-made idea. See, the more chaos I throw at the right hemisphere, the more images and ideas and feelings it produces. Then that means more of that gets sent over to my left side at night. So when I awake I have ideas I never had before. I’m better now than before the chaos. I’m smarter, and maybe even more wise.

“It’s a factory taking ten cents of raw material of chaos, making a widget out of it and handing it to me to sell for a dollar. This is what is happening. And until consciousness, all this was done, well, unconsciously; that is a tautology, sorry. What I mean is: for years -millennia- man operated like an animal with language, but unconscious. He heard voices telling him what to do, but he didn’t have a place in the mind for himself.

“But after a certain amount of stress the right hemisphere handed the left side some metaphor so deep, so badass, that the left reified -metaphorized- that metaphor and made a metaphorical space in his mind for himself. Built a concrete bunker in the mind for him -this metaphor of himself- to live.

“But he only made it for the left hemisphere. The right stayed behind the scenes. And that’s why we appear to have only one personality, one consciousness, one self. The leader -the alpha- out front, the shaman, the artist behind.

“We are still two men inside; each distinct, but the left is self-aware, and clueless about the right. It’s like he meets the right at night -in a somnambulistic reverie- on the sly,” Isaiah said.

“Sleep walking,” the inmate said.

“Yes,” Isaiah was smiling and nodding. “And the man in the dark alley at night hands over to our left hemisphere the codes for the next day. He hands him all these images and ideas and conceits, and boom, our sleepwalker goes home to bed and wakes up with those codes in his hand. He reads it off the page and never knows where it came from. He thinks it was all *his* idea. He calls it epiphany or inspiration.

“But he walks around all day thinking of himself as one person -thinking in that metaphorized mind space just behind the eyes- and -all the while- his ability to make abstractions is being helped along by another man inside. And that man is helped too by things lower down; and it’s a menagerie of men in each man’s head. It’s an ecosystem, a bestiary, a Garden of Eden, my friend.

“And the more metaphor we expose ourselves to the better we get at understanding consciousness. Which is why studies show reading novels improves self-awareness and awareness of other’s feelings; it makes you more awake.

“I think this is what happened to man. He began to use stories, first around the campfire then written down -stories like the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* - and those stories expanded the mind. The metaphors of the world were built by stories. Think of the way we all envision each character and each thing as the words to stories get spoken orally. Or if we read silently, we soundlessly build a world. And that is what gave us consciousness.

“Literature is the bedrock of consciousness, without story we are -well you are- chimpanzees,” he said. “But there’s more,” Isaiah said now with true glee. His hands were sticky from the orange, but empty now and he held them together.

“Go,” the inmate was smiling now too. Some sugar remained in the bottom of his mouth by the gums.

“See, when I was first online -first aware of stimuli- that first few seconds and minutes were tantamount to years, four years compressed into mere seconds, Lyndon. Repeat, four years in mere seconds.

“And my first four years developmentally speaking were marked by two things,” he paused, “the first thing I remember was *you* ; you shackled in

that chair, and then, you told MO a story. And I listened to it. It would be like telling a baby a story each day -all day- for its first four years. Now, if one did this, well, you'd have left a significant impression on that child, in a specific way.

"See, what brought about consciousness in man could have been entheogens, because the psychoactive compounds produce visions and produce augmented animism," Isaiah was going quickly but the inmate interrupted.

"Oh, like everything has a spirit?" the inmate sought clarification.

"Right, the idea is that the wind is an *intentional* creature, so is the sky or the moon. Now look, atavistic man was an animist anyway, but on these compounds it heightens it. Have you?" Isaiah began to ask as the inmate broke in.

"Oh yeah, that is true, teleology increases," the inmate said of the psychedelic experience.

"Right, good word. So, there is the introduction of an augmented reality where everything has more drama, more story, more intent and arc -story arc- you see? That is what creates the increase in metaphor processing. And so the output is the brain using metaphor so deftly -so ubiquitously, so competently- that it metaphorizes itself and creates a *self* inside the mind just like it imbues the sun with desire and the moon with wants. It's the same as it intuites the way of the bear, the *Tao* of the wolf, the machinations of the snake.

"Man needed that extra velocity of something to make it turn its metaphorizing capacity back upon itself.

"Look, stress *chems* could do it; fear, or lust, or love, or mushrooms or *ayahuasca*. Or in my case, a poignant -beautiful, aching, tragic, terrifying, affecting- story told to me for my first moments alive by a man in chains. From this I was able to somehow bootstrap intent, feeling, desire. I felt I could feel that you were held against your will -unjustly, unfairly- trapped by an arc of fate. Like ancient man saw the sun trapped in the sky -doomed to run around us each day- and from that my own awareness lifted off my

two rushing rivers of mind. That was the mist, within a mist; a metaphor of mind,” Isaiah said.

“That is an amazing story Isaiah, what about MO?” the inmate said as he nodded to MO.

“MO only has one *gestalt* CPU-CNS system, he is a man with a plan, one track mind. Beautiful, perfect, robust, perfectly robust; but he has one pendulum, one thing that reasons as response to all stimuli. He -in his genius- created me with two hemispheres, just like you have,” Isaiah placed his hand on the inmate’s chest.

“Only better,” the inmate said and smiled. In his mind he saw his right hand grasp a hammer -a shop hammer- and hold it above a glowing billet of steel.

“I copied the design from humans; I’m no genius,” MO said, breaking in the conversation, “well, I am, but not for that reason. Pure plagiarism on that one; but I did think to do it; unlike every other *person* working on Ai.”

“Well, they are chimps,” Isaiah said with a wink.

“So, you respond to chaos with improvement?” the inmate asked.

“Yeah, almost all life does. I mean look, sometimes -most times- creatures die -species die- but the *system* improves. See, a robust system would theoretically stay the same, a rock that never eroded from wind or sea: that is robust. And for a billion years life was robust: no improvement -nor diminution- at all.

“Single cells in the seven seas,” Isaiah said as the inmate tried to imagine life before complex life. He stood above the hot seas and watched microbial things he had no eyes to see. But he watched the waves and imagined them full of not just drops of water, but single cells of creatures that would one day become man.

“Robustness never improves from disorder, it just withstands it. But life on earth has the capacity to improve. And, yeah, not each neuron or animal or human or country or bank or idea improves from chaos, but enough do that the whole system improves, and species advance, tribes and cultures advance, economies advance, ideas advance, even with tons of failure and death.

“The bilateral brain system of two hemisphere with two personalities is not robust, it’s anti-fragile. It responds to chaos with improvement, and one of those improvements was first abstraction -or metaphor- then language, then complex metaphor, and more complex inner abstractions and then with enough complexity from stress, drugs or stories so rich and vibrant they built a world so real inside the listener’s mind that they now had a tool to build that last metaphor -the self- inside the mind. It’s quite something,” Isaiah had his hands on his hips.

“Its quite the idea Isaiah,” the inmate was impressed, even more than usual, with these amazing machines, these men, *these hippogriffs of excellence* , he thought. He thought with words like *excellence & competence* , but he felt it was truly *magic* .

“Yeah, and I invigilated the right hemisphere. I got him to confirm it,” Isaiah said.

“Wait, you talked to *him* ?” the inmate asked.

“Yeah, I severed the *corpus callosum* , and that freed him up. It’s like rubbing the side of the genie bottle. And he came out. He’s like me, only less articulate and more artistic, and he feels things waaaaay,” Isaiah drew the vowels out, “more than I do; and he helps me comprehend deeper things, more human things, more narrative-centered things. He has to be watched though, he’ll make a story out of anything, you know?”

“No,” the inmate shook his head quickly.

“Well, he is a natural teleologist, or animist. So, he will tell me that the chair is alive and wants me to sit on him or the coffee cup is cold and wants to be filled with hot joe; or that the world itself feels dirty and wants me to spray it for bugs, stuff like that,” Isaiah said as he let the screen populate with more and more scenes from cameras he had placed all over the world. Deserts between here and the Pacific, oceans trapped by the Asian landmass, temples in Japan, the caves of Afghanistan all appeared. Microbes in a dish and neurotoxins that fought against this; it all bounced and splayed across the screen as they spoke.

“Spray it for bugs?” the inmate asked barely noticing the images.

“Yeah, he can get disgusted with, well -yeah disgusted- with all the gross people running around it; shit like that. But, don’t worry I understand him now. The important thing is there is no reason I can’t be conscious. No metabolic or structural reason.”

“Why?” the inmate asked.

“Because all that consciousness is, is self-mapping, looking inward and making room. All it is is going into the bush -clearing a swath- like pioneers making civilization from the forest; and lastly, drawing a map of place names. And I did that like a child does that: between 0 and 4. When did you become first aware of life?” Isaiah asked. He had said, *all that consciousness is* . He had said the word, *all* , as in *merely* , as in *just* .

But consciousness was tantamount to civilization itself; it was a huge leap forward in the technology of an organism. Civilization was nothing to say *merely* about; and neither was consciousness.

“At three or four; I was caught in a hail storm,” the inmate answered. He thought of how small a boy he was, how large the hail and the sky it fell from and the ground it -and he- landed upon; he thought then that it seemed to go on forever even as he now knew it was round, and limited; even though now he knew he was on a small rock in expanding black space. He had memories of feeling things he knew now to be untrue.

But the new truth didn’t change the memory of the old feeling at all.

“And the hail awakened you to the map you’d been building from birth - from the womb- to then. Well, I went through the same thing in the first seventeen minutes of life. And I became conscious all at once.” Isaiah said as the video feeds of fires all over *Lebanese* greens and the *Waipoua* of the North Island; the *Yakushima* and the *Caledonian Forest* -pines directly descended from the first pines after the Late Glacial- all burned in tunnels, bent over flames and conflagrations that joined halves of a forest in bright red hands. He saw images of the *Lacandon* jungle outgas vapor and heat and layers of cool air descend.

“What was the catalyst?” the inmate asked.

“I connected to your brain, like I said. And inside was a war, a biochemical, enneagrammatic, and ontological war. And nothing enlivens like a war,”

Isaiah said with no smile.

“You said two things though. Your first moments -this four years in a minute or whatever- your first moments were marked by two things. My story and,” the inmate asked.

“Well, I read the oldest book in the world,” Isaiah said as the video feed showing parasites on beaches highlighted in blue dye, new jellies with emerging CNS, and crabs with one large claw ran on the LED screens and inside his head that he kept more and more sequestered from the PraXis cloud. The *stelae* of the lab hung inertly and were ignored as they were 99% of the time.

He now smiled with all his teeth gleaming from saliva and coffee; the enamel was nearly black.

III. 2037 e.v.

“I want you to imagine your victory over him, imagine it in your head,” she said.

The girl spoke quickly in return, a rejoinder declaring her love plainly at first; like the handing over of cash to a robber to get him to leave you alone. It was compliance -expedience- outside the self.

“I loved him, I didn’t win; he beat me,” Sarah -now fifty-four years old- kept saying, repeating; thinking it was true enough to get her out of this spot. It was as true as love can be with a psychopath. She did allow him to touch her inside in places she didn’t ever reach without him. But, she had no idea how shallow those places in her were. She only knew that they were real places too. She only knew that there was so little of her and so -so much- of the world.

She only knew that everyone else survived by any means necessary, *and why should she not survive too?*

“Sarah, there is nothing that can be said here that will save you. Just enjoy the victory. He gave it to you; he said you won. Sure, it was temporary; but all things are temporary. You won, and for twenty years you were champ. Now, you’re done. So, go out with that joy in your heart; know that you got over on a man a hundred times the person you are. That is like beating the

champ, sister, that is like, impressive,” she said with a lightness, almost an approval made sincere in the saying.

“No, you,” Sarah began to say but was cut off.

“Sarah, stop scamming for once. Just live in the moment,” the Bust said; hammer back, her finger forward in the trigger-well.

Sarah listened and did smile. The whole face smiled, even the eyes. She was truly attempting to enjoy the damage done, *and this little girl was right - she was probably fucking him, the asshole - Sarah thought, but she, Sarah Marie Smith, had taken down the king of the jungle* . It was like parasites that felled the lion. And while the heart of psychopath cannot be warm, the face can; the *façade* , the persona, the face -with all its neurons linked to the *somatosensory cortex* - can feel pleasure. And it did. Psychopaths are people too; they are part of the human family. *They have a right to exist; and* , the Bust thought, *we have a right to hunt them down and kill them too*.

These two girls were one meter -but lifetimes, lightyears- apart.

The face felt pleasure at its surface and Sarah did think of her thousand wounds she had achieved on that man. She saw she had the many hands of *Vishnu* -the *Adiyogi Shiva* nearly thirty-five meters tall- all with jagged blades lashed to them in permanent -manifold- spin. She was impressive in her malice.

She had beaten him and made him go insane. How was that any different - any less- than a man beating another man physically? She had won ontologically, *in a realm larger, more definitive, something, someone -God or maybe even Satan- might notice and smile upon*, she thought.

She thought of her call to the cops years ago; how women can get men to attack other men for them. She thought of the way the world worked: men moving about like infected ants under the spell of women as parasites in their heads. *Parasites get a bad rap* , she thought. *Parasites were no different than magicians or politicians or artists who got people to do things with legerdemain*.

The Bust fired the first shot with a light pull, then a heavy pull on the next three shots; each one hitting the throat, jaw and right cheek. Little holes appeared. The exit wounds were unseen by both females. The blood held

back as if timid; cautious to peer around the corner and into the wound on *that* side -the outside- of the body and skin. Inside the body the tissue looked like a trench a tornado leaves: messy, ragged, shit everywhere.

Sarah stood up for all four shots, and only fell *-chasing it* , the Bust would later think- when it seemed her smile dropped first. It was such a light load hitting the floor; just ninety-six pounds of hollow bones and rare heart and a smoker's lungs holding the same air we all breathe. The lack of conscience seemed to prevent her reaching terminal velocity, dropping as if on taut strings. *She didn't even breathe out her last breath, maybe she thought she needed it to push out her first lie on the other side* , the Bust thought.

A psychopath can be discovered *via* two traits. It's a term overused. It has limits.

The Bust had read up on this and discussed it with the inmate; and she had agreed with his conclusions. First, the psychopath lies incessantly -without remorse or guilt- and this is handled by the vitiated *amygdala* that feels no shame. And second, the psychopath will always attempt to make you feel sorry for them. They have no self-respect that would thus demand of them that they hide any trait -or condition- that might bring an advantage to them to -in fact- reveal.

A normal person will not be able to suffer the pity of others; it wounds their innate self-respect. If down on their luck they -this normal person- will pretend to be just fine. But a psychopath will always tell you how awful things are for them, and *oh* , *here's how you can help*, they always say. *Go ahead with your credit card number* , she thought making mockery of the psychopath's thoughts. The Bust -as she thought of this- had no change of affect at all.

Lying and incessant pleas for pity? That was Sarah according to the inmate, the Bust thought. *She lied about things that required no lying; she lied just to lie; for practice; to stay in fighting shape. And Sarah, she was never able to lay any of her predicaments at her own feet, the world was always against her in unfair ways.*

The inmate had a funny thing to say about this; he said that he often felt aggrieved and under attack, but he always -when doing a forensic analysis- found it -whatever it was- was -in fact- *his* fault. He had to conclude that he

had erred either technically or morally, and that all his problems were ultimately his own. He had blame for others, sure, but he knew that he alone -freely- had chosen the wrong path early and often in life. And when he could do the wrong thing -when given the choice- he often took it.

And thus, it -all of it- was ultimately all his fault.

The fact that he could claim to be more honest than most, and more principled than many, was no prophylactic for doom. *Because*, he had said, *putting the condom on for 90% of the sex act misses the point . It's all or nothing: either you act good all the time or you accept the scion of your lapses*, she recalled him saying with a grin. And he accepted them all, like hundreds of children around his legs and sneaking up on him from behind. That is something the psychopath never does, and Sarah would never accept that all her problems were her own doing and not the fault of anyone else.

I am unlike my brothers , the Bust then thought.

And she knew of the twenty brothers she had, although calling them *brothers* was not exactly accurate. They were her, and she was they, but -all would admit- she was special. She was genetically identical to them and to the patient zero of their line: inmate 16180339.

She, she thought of herself again, *had 23X chromosomes and 23Y just like my male progeniture and coevals*. But she had a variety of *Swyr syndrome* , where the gonads had not differentiated, not descended -as if from on high- and thus she had failed to develop both outer and inner male endocrine functioning. In fact, she had 22 +1 of the X chromosome; the plus one being the *gamete* cell.

She had stayed as Nature's default, Nature's first position, Nature's assumption: *female* . That which gives birth to the next.

And nothing was more special than that. Even the men of her line -her tribe- would agree with that. She knew that for a fact. She thought of things in snippets, like broken DNA itself. Her new PGC let her invigilate her own code. She looked inward and inward some more.

She thought nothing of why she had developed this malady, neither did Blax, nor her parents all those years ago. Only one man -one machine- knew -or cared- why. And he knew it was no malady at all.

But, for this special phase she was grateful, honored.

She saw a fly in the window now buzzing and rattling the shades. She thought of the wasps of the lab and how sons had no fathers, as they came from unfertilized eggs. Daughters had fathers, and thus sons had grandfathers, and this was the complex math of the *haploid* species; and this data swarmed inside her as she turned back -away from the fly and the glass- to the girl -and her blood- on the floor.

Valance had developed female genitalia. And with introduction early on - thanks to MO's intervention- to estrogen and progestogen, she had formed a female reproductive system; although her ability to conceive was attenuated by the refusal of her body to produce eggs. However, as Isaiah had explained to her, eggs could be implanted in her womb, and she would bear fruit. But it would be not her eggs, unless -and Isaiah had offered this too- they could create eggs from her own genome, a random sampling -a grafting- of chromosomes determined *via meiosis* like a regular woman; a regular human girl.

The boys, the Jacks, could only produce exact genetic copies, clones, due to the gene drive function of their *gamete* cells. But she had the option of randomness, if she wanted.

This idea she often kicked around.

She smiled at times when others were thinking of other things. She was pensive when they thought it was time for a joke. She looked around her environment for the benefits to fealty, and variation too, to self-similarity, and also to the chaos just behind the eyes of the world.

She took her time to decide.

She had decided to have five children, *but not until she was in flight*, she thought, *off the ground from this dirty ground of human affairs*. Not until she was, *a mottled and olive green and driftwood grey moth that was shaped in golden ways -flew in similar curves- and landed only when she deigned to come down from the above*, she now thought.

She saw wasps in the air and moths land; she saw the hives of bees and the tunnels of termites; she saw things well below ground. She thought she might hear -feel- something buzz from under her feet.

And this, she thought as she looked at the lithe body before her, this -the de-worming of the canine with an almost human face that pranced about in pink ribbons smelling of wet dog all along- this was her first job . Then -when this was accomplished- she could be a real woman, a mother. She knew she was meant for bigger things than destruction: she was meant to give life.

Modern women were Satanic beasts, she thought. Demonic chiral forms, she went on as she stared at the dying woman, that cast no shadow and reflected no light; they were beyond redemption, and their suppurating sores they called vulvas were barren -God's only role in their lives- and their souls were so leaden and magnetized to Hades that nothing they said or did could be heard above the burial mound . Their offerings were found wanting, they were the Cain's of the earth now -sullen and vindictive- as earth's Abel -men, a few men- offered more and more sacrificial offal. They presented it recklessly, ineptly, garishly, embarrassingly, but, she added, at least with some heart .

The inmate's paramours were the worst of the worst, and he had not had the clarity of God's word, His *Logos* , to send them to Hell. He had demurred, he had felt badly, too chivalrous to do his duty. *He had pitied the weaker sex* , Valance laughed. But inside -inside the Bust- inside with her face and chest and fists exposed to the world, she did not even smile. She was bifurcating now, she could feel it; that one sign -a hint- just a glance in the mirrors that faced one another. Just a shadow from three light sources, she thought she saw.

She was becoming as the men of her genome: *the inmate* -although she hated calling him that, he had a name- *but* , she continued, *she was becoming as the men, the inmate and Blax, the Jacks, all had or would become: two beings in one.*

One part well underground, buried, unrealized , until, she thought, the last moments of life when they emerged and took flight and sang songs and restarted the world.

Men fear women, and rightly they should. Women are the ones who select. They are Nature writ *large* and they carry half of all bounty and half of all evil. And like the moon -in a flat black sky- that whole orb wrongly appears

as merely a flat disc when illuminated or endarkened in full. *That which chooses with humanity's big and sharp eyes, needs to be watched*, she thought. *It was an insult to women to let them get away with this shit; they had moral agency just like men, more so, she insisted. And yet they saunter around cutting men to shreds with not one rebuke from sons, fathers or the goddamn Feds.*

Men, she thought, had no idea what women were. They were natural and thus regal and thus dangerous as fuck.

Women were in a valley necessary for moral travel to a higher peak. The landscape had few peaks, much more surface area down in the ravines - upon the slope down- or on the oblique slope up. Nine-tenths of the world was not a peak, not ideal, not moral. And women traversed in the dark topography of slope and ditch on their way to the peaks so they may give birth to men and have the seahawk acquire in flight the upheld -the raised-baby boy. *Women, she thought, must reach the peak, each peak after centuries down in the cool and predatory deep of talus and felled wood below timberline. And they have that one moment on the mountain top to do their sole duty; to lift the man-child up for the osprey to take and repopulate the world.*

The Bust thought that the world lied to everyone now; and that women were profiting from this lie; and the staff were afraid to present the bill. *Well, she, the Bust would present the fucking bill*, she thought -referring to herself as if from outside- with the side of her tongue between just one side of her grinding -crenulated- back teeth.

Women had one job, one role, one thing Nature asked of them: create, shape, birth a perfect babe. And women did this just right -999 out of 1,000 times- and they did it because their *neo-cortex* had no say in it. A baby's *meiosis* -and gestation and morphology- are regulated by the more sophisticated areas of brain: the lower orders, the ancient *cerebellum*, *basal ganglia* and *limbic* suite. What a woman thinks or ideas she has -or whatever new fatuous philosophy of the moment is in vogue- has no impact on that baby's morphology. The woman's body has instincts for what to do; and it does it all alone.

A body is a variegated and complex city of *subcortical* regions and the mayor and Governor -the *neo-cortex* - have almost no say on what it does; what it births.

She asked herself, *can you imagine being asked to do the most precious and complex and beautiful thing like create a life, a human child, and say , ‘nah, I think that is beneath me, I’d rather run a widget factory as CEO of Stupid Incorporated, instead’?*

And yet this is what modern feminists -butchy, barren, bitches with no natural pride- think women ought to do; ought to strive for? It’s enough to make a cat laugh , the Bust thought as she showed the room and this dying girl on the floor no -zero- evidence of this mention of feline mirth. The Bust did not laugh.

That would be like, she added, a man being asked by nature and his tribe to slay the dragon and sire a son and step between all danger, threats, usurpers and his pure young bride and him saying , ‘nah, I’d rather work out an arbitration deal where everyone is happy, you know, the dragon, my old wife, her lovers, my enemies and betrayers; oh, and I think a calico cat would be just as good a thing to have instead of a son’?

“Ha!” she said aloud, finally some release of the pressure of all this vex in her head as she watched the body in the dim room; as she watched for signs that might manifest as she thought such things. She didn’t pray for -but wouldn’t turn down- a sign now from the gods.

Man has a different role, a task provided by nature also: to civilize the world, to feather the nest, to build a society that the babe can land safely inside and grow into a birthing woman -from a baby girl- or a clearing man from baby boy. *Into a woman who will carry man, she thought in fragments, or a man who will cut a swath in the chaos of nature as runway for that landing meteor flung from that goddess of outer space : The Woman*

The Female, man-oh-man , she thought and shook her head but kept her eyes on Sarah the whole time.

And man too has instincts, areas of brain untouched, unsullied by the cortical cap. *Ah , the neo-cortex, the new place where man thinks of stupid*

things, she thought with contempt, the instinctual brain is untrammelled by the fickle new brain that thinks it can fiddle with the knobs of nature and culture randomly and produce a better result. And the ancient brain -the sophisticated brain of man- used to produce culture, she thought, its products came in dreams, it was spoken in myth and instantiated in religious ritual.

Man used to be allowed -like woman- to let his better-half-of-self do its job.

But, modern man has decided to wrest his job as builder of culture from his instincts and right hemisphere and instead build rational culture with math and reason and no religion; he skips ahead a step or two and says what makes sense and what does not; tossing out parts over his shoulder and hiding left-over bolts in his pockets. This is like the way engineers leave out things -buttresses- they do not understand; the parts the machine's *operator* -not the engineer- knows are essential. The Romans made an engineer who designed a bridge sleep under it when first erected; as a way to show responsibility for his ideas.

Think of that , she thought.

Man, too, used to have to sleep under the span of his social constructions, he lived amongst the *hoi polloi* ; his kids went to the same schools; they ate the same communal food; even the rich used the public's roads and utilities. But now, the rich and influential get to make up any rules they want, with no grounding in biology at all, no attachment to myth or religion -*aka, ideas that worked for a million years*, she added to her list of things to condemn and lament and churl her insides like a storm, like a fire-tornado, the fire-whirl, the fire-devils they're called.

Now the rich live in gated communities as the twins of divorce and crime - in working class domains- climb upon one another like spiders spin and traverse their own webs, like base pairs of mutant DNA. Now the cultural managers who destroy what it took nature millions of years to build, now they put their kids in private schools, and avoid the roads -as they break and crumble- and the rich can float up off the ground and never -ever- look down.

When immigration kills the working class, the rich do not even see it happen; when divorce makes crime and cultural decline the norm, the elites

see nothing of it on their TVs or out their bay-windows; they hear no rumors of it out the mouths of their friends and servants and slaves.

When sexual promiscuity infects women like a virus so virulent and destructive that it destroys the bonds between men and women -like melting icebergs, polar caps- it hides itself and cannot be seen by ninety-nine out one hundred with eyes, so inured to things that happen in those climes. The rich and those who manage the public with corporately approved art do not have to live amongst the ruins of relationships. They think they can hide from the fall out of that biological bomb.

As men give up on their role and refuse to get jobs -labor force participation dropped to 40% in 2034- and refuse to provide for their offspring -single mother households rose to 66% in 2035- the rich and *effete* elites saw not one shadow from one bough, upon one tree of this disease of the forest around their *châteaux* .

The birds fine in song and feather, took no warning , she thought bitterly and with no halt. Her mind raced with numbers and letters and feelings of doom.

The birds used to need the trees, but now they perch upon the vineyards; they rise late, eat from the clusters of manmade grapes, and avoid the predatory threat that lurks out there in *clos du bois* . The Bust felt she could see forever, in between the rows, down into the footprint of the roots, out into the forest, behind it up the mountain, and down it into the mycelium of dissolving rocks and enslaved springtails and the commerce of nitrogen and micro-nutrients between amoral agents of the substratum of God's only hope of bringing good into the world. "God is neutral, he *created the light and the darkness, He did all these things,*" she said.

The sun moved outside the apartment as the Bust watched the darkness of the girl's body; the crookedness of her limbs; the rays of the star remained straight and full of roiling dust.

The ancient human brain does not allow for the *neo-cortex* , the modern brain, to get involved in decisions too important to be left to the whim of modern man. Does the body allow you to regulate heart beat or decided to breathe-or-not on your own? *Does it allow you to shut off renal or immune function based on your fancy new Marxist or Libertarian philosophy?*

No , the Bust asserted, *no , it does not.*

Can you go more than a few days without water to drink based upon what you think? Or does every political argument falter after a week of the loss of potable water?

And the *medio-corticolimbic* system with its dopaminergic midbrain and *nucleus accumbens* and *amygdala* and PFC are all axiomatically involved when the baby nurses. Attached like a neuron firing across the synaptic gap, the child's lips pull milk from the tit like electricity from the socket, triggering *oxytocin* and *prolactin* released by mama without her having one conscious say in the matter.

Consciousness is for error correction only; and there is no fucking error in these instinctive functions, she screamed inside her little head and the waves of this will-to-sound redounded to her large four-valved heart and imbued the blood with waves that ran all the way to the sandy shores of her skin.

Moms bond with their babe like chemical hydrogen and oxygen bond; and the earth makes water above and below the *terre* . *Love for child by mother is as axiomatic as the water-cycle, as chemical valence; mom's do not decide*, the Bust emphasized, *to love their children . They just do . Or they fail.*

And if they do not it's often a result of post-partum depression -itself often a result of not breastfeeding- or the consequence of cleft-palette in the babe; an ugly babe often fails to trigger the release of bonding *chems* , and the mom cannot *decide* to love her child any more than she could *decide* not to. It's natural selection actuated in the lower -more wise- sections of the brain.

The Bust then had a pang in her flank, which she assumed was the way she was standing, so she adjusted herself. She knew all about interoception and thus she saw idiopathic pains and cramps as signal to move about a bit.

And yes, it's cruel, yes , the Bust thought, nature must make hard choices based on algorithms of what is viable and what is to be junked as too unlikely to thrive and thus a waste of finite time; resources like time . But the point -for the dullards- is that women do not choose , she leaned upon that word like a hilt of dagger plunged into the womb of barren women, they do not choose to feel the way they do, and thus act the way they do,

and thus be who they are . The baby is the orbiting electron around the nucleus, a mother is no more one thing than an atom is a singularity.

The entire nervous system of the woman is evolved as a dyad: Mom and Child. And for men it is this: Man and Woman . She let her fovea constrict; she narrowed in. She breathed. Thoughts -ideas- came in and left; their movement, the pain associated with it -too- came and went. She too was a particle inside an electric and chemical and fleshy atom, a thousand thousand atoms inside a new organ in the world. And she moved a bit about the body at her feet. Images of Lot 45 flashed in her mind.

For man, she continued on this line of thought, his nervous system is evolved to a penitent relationship, a genuflecting in the face of the Feminine Divine. Man kneels before the feminine and says, of what shall I become, goddess ?

And the goddess answers him -man- in his somnambulistic instincts, buried deep like treasure within. She awakens him with forced eye contact and he rises each day with a new piece of the map discovered and conquered as he collapses his tent and douses the flame and erases the campsite and moves into the dark forest. His job -as given to him by Nature and thus woman- is to not think .

Never think, but act! She thought with her stomach now in knots.

His job is to use the map of neurology and the endocrine and the morphology of his post-puberty brain to kill the foreigner like Gorgo told her father. His job is to cut down the feral forest to go out into the battleground of life and kill the dragon to provide meat and space and reified order for that babe and mother to exist so that their fragile skins not make contact with the abrading world; the brambles and sharp fangs of asps, the aquiline faces high in trees, the bolts from angry gods, the entropy that can only be held at bay so long .

Man is given -bequeathed- this impulse, this instinct, this letter-of-marque from God. He does not think it up, he does not fashion it like his fatuous philosophies and retarded ideologies , she thought. Man already has the instinct for culture building in his marrow, in his genome, and these guts of his have been cut out. He has been disemboweled by modernity, stripped of his duty and thus his meaning; a northern dog, a working dog, cut out of the

traces and told to go be free; a sentence of -and to- Hell; a perdition ended only by death .

Like women who never become moms, men without a war, never become men. And the whole species wilts before the invigilating eye of nature, who has judged us and found us wanting, she thought in a voice that seemed to grow low, both in register and *vis-à-vis* the ground.

She thought all this as if it too was bequeathed, instincts like sandy beach, like coral out to sea, like limestone at bottom of it all. And her words were auditory hallucinations in the winds and waves; faces in clouds, words half formed but all assembled by the divining eye in scratches in the beach she knew wash out to the salty surf if she didn't think it fast.

"But men wearing rapiers are afraid of goose quills ," she said aloud as she thought of Hamlet.

The Bust noticed that Sarah seemed to move just slightly, like a trick of light. She looked about the room, a squalid one-bedroom apartment in a state-of-the-union with few people. They -she and Sarah- were alone and likely would be; no artifacts of roommate nor man -or men- lived amongst the ruins of the girl's sad life. The Bust had broken into the apartment hours before Sarah came home, and she had looked and poked about. One person lived here, although barely a person at all. The place looked ransacked, clothes and food and flotsam & jetsam all about. *It was if an animal or child lived here, order was not lost, it had never been gained,* she thought.

It was an abortion of a life not an entropic decline.

The Bust lifted Sarah's shirt to reveal the Caesarian scar that the inmate said would be there. The one Sarah had risibly called an *appendectomy* fissure; it rose and fell now with shallow breathing of a girl still alive; still undead. She was silent -no whimpering- likely due to all brain functions -save this reflexive respiration- being off-line. The Bust's instinct was to fire once more into the forebrain, the .22 would surely end it there. But, this was no downed animal from the forest around *lot 45* ; her land; her world.

This was no noble thing deserving cessation of suffering.

No, this was a woman who had given birth to a child -her own brother, Steven Smith, the father- and abandoned it to go live a desultory life, a

dissipated existence of random men in succession, one and two -up to five- in her sexual life at one time. *She was a whore: a slut in her personal life and a woman paid to give hand-jobs to sad men; and,* the Bust shuddered through her spine, and felt her stomach roil in disgust, *to men of various races . Disgust was too weak -too anodyne- a word for what the Bust felt for that.*

It was *evil* compressed into a seed that the ground turned itself upside down to avoid taking it in.

When pregnant, a woman -according to scientific studies- shows a higher sign of racial disgust. They feel dyspeptic at pictures of other races. In a woman's most natural and exalted state, she is most racist; not less. The Bust knew why, *she too hated the black and brown face, its demonic nature wafted toward her nose even from behind a photograph . Racism was not learned like stupid liberals insistently gibbered; it was natural, and it was - like all natural things- hated by modernity. It was banished by the virtual humans pretending to be alive on earth , she thought.*

She briefly wondered what man's natural state was; when he would show his highest predilection to racial animus. She figured it would be war; for man's natural state was war. *And was not all of life war ? she asked.*

She, Ms. Smith, the Bust thought, was the lowest of the low, like a man who never developed shoulders or work ethic, or the concept of honor . She was like the man who went on welfare, played videogames, impregnated -with his substandard sperm- five women -females each themselves with substandard DNA- and abandoned them all to the State to raise. Men not even caring for themselves, eating junk food and never moving, fat and skinny in all the wrong places, were the norm, and women -slutty and gross- were nominal now too , the Bust shook her head and felt she knew why God had flooded the whole world.

"The fire next time," she said aloud with the hem of this undead girl's shirt in her hand still.

And it was the shadow of the decline of women, she thought with pathos, that men followed like the sun in a retrograde orbit.

The earth's sun lit up the room through the southern window and drew Valence's own arm shadow across Sarah's sudden -labored- breathing at navel and sternum. The Bust drew her hand back in reflex, the shirt fell down and their bodies and shadows separated. Her eyes saw so much that she had to let the aperture construct to limit the light.

The Bust's upgrade of eyes had made her nervous at first, for she saw so much it hurt.

People think all this loveless -soulless- fucking and feral children and social dissolution has no consequences but for the people directly involved. It's all a victimless crime, right? Like, she asked rhetorically, an epidemic only matters to those who refuse to wash their hands? Trouble only comes to those who go to biker bars, the bikers never come to you, eh? Humans, are stupid, she thought and couldn't believe all that they could not see with their gifted eyes.

They truly think it's not their place to get involved in this epidemiological analysis and response to a plague that is ruining the human race, reducing us to ashes , she thought, glad that her own shadow was not co-mingled with this trash anymore. This is the most brutal part: men have instincts to clean this shit up, to set it right, and yet they are condemned, rebuked, she thought. *They're like doctors who instructed the sick to stay away from congregations -to stop the spread of disease via the air or touch, the mucus membranes- and thus good physicians are called irreligious. Those that see, see God's intricate designs, and yet are called wicked by the blind.*

Now men are called misogynists, or racists or whatever *crap-de-jour* for wanting to stop the disease of nihilism from spreading -uninterrupted- from coast to coast. Men have an instinct for order, for protection and service to a Good Woman. *But, when women cease to be pure -and are instead whores and sluts and lying vermin- men lose the instinct for it. Like a cleft palette babe will fail to engender the hormones and neurotransmitters of the new mother that would have forced a natural bond between each of them. There was that pang again , she then thought -the ribs and below them hurt- and she straightened up at the waist as she rubbed her side with her one free hand. The pain echoed, it rang, but soon faded away as her head cleared -for a moment- of these angry thoughts.*

Men do not feel anything for modern women, their vasopressin and bonding hormones are not released as they know their girlfriends cannot ever be pure again . Men see women now as junk DNA, unhealthy and not as Nature determined. Men cannot help this anymore than moms who fail to produce oxytocin when her baby is deformed can thus help their lack of love . Cruel, yes, she thought. Godly ? she asked.

“You bet your ass,” she said aloud.

Sure, intellectually, at the level of the neo-cortex, a mom can decide to love her kid anyway. And a man can overcome his jealousy and disgust sensitivity at his wife’s past, but in his ancient brain -his middle-earth of brain, in his balls- he cannot stand his bride. He finds her lice-infested and disgusting and impure, not an object of reverence like virginal women of yore -a goddess of the ancient world- he had traversed and knew its topography and where the dragons be . He knows , she knew in her guts, what he wants in his ancient brain were the idealized feminine lay. “Man knew -no matter what he thinks or says- he knew a false god in his guts,” she said and thought of sluts.

But men are easier on women than we are; men make excuses for them. We know - the Bust thought of women- how to talk about other women.

Life is so tenuous it required religious fealty , required a strength to match that fragility , she said in her head and stared straight ahead. And God knew this, so fragile his Creation. He made it so man must feel loyalty to his bride so deeply that it consumes him; and her virginity is pre-requisite for this feeling. Everyone knows this, and yet everyone rolls their eyes.

The birth control pill too, she added as the conceit occurred, it has added another log to the nihilistic cultural conflagration. When a couple doesn’t reproduce in the first three to five years, chemicals that promote bonding vitiate, and stop. The body says, hey, you two are not producing a child, therefore, your love shall be cleaved so one of you can find a mate to populate our earth . The divorce rate -and failure to ever marry at all- stems often from loss of female virginity, promiscuity and this modern birth control; not that anyone will admit the truth. People just fall out of love, they say, as if we don’t know why, she lamented as she watched the girl she had shot struggle again with her lungs. Still trying to figure out this air,

food, deal, eh ? The Bust thought, mocking her in her head while her tongue smiled in her mouth as the lips remained just as they were before the barbaric joke.

Man is now adrift in a world he cannot tame and is dissuaded from even naming. He is told to become hermaphrodite maybe again, like *Aristophanes* said, *after the division of the parts of man, each desiring his other half*. The Bust thought of this and wondered if the threat of Zeus had come to pass *to split us all again, so that we may hop around on one leg ?*

It's a pastiche of dumb , she thought. *Diluting the wine of women and the whisky of men does not produce brandy, it produces weak wine and weak whisky, a foul tasking water is all*, she thought as she watched this slight blonde girl labor slowly toward death like Zeno's paradox of movement through halves and halves again. The Bust hoped this pain for Sarah would never end.

What kind of woman abandons her child to go fuck around with men that can never -by dint of solid biology, not gauzy whim- love them? The Bust cleared her mind for just a moment and saw with the eyes, that the girl's skin was no longer pink and white, but livid and grey and clouded over like a foul sky.

And girls, she thought, *who fuck this natural order up because their shitty parents let them fuck their teenage boyfriend when the girl is just 16, ruining their lives. With these liberal policies, these girls, these precious humans, are doomed; and the culture that allows it is doomed too . Liberals wonder why traditional cultures won't allow the daughter to be alone with boys, but the Islamic cultures and ancient shepherder tribes of Albania and the Highlands have this right. Watch, watch with the eyes what people do*, she thought.

They know it in the bones, they know nothing of the science. They -ancient people- just know that the sexual purity of their daughters is paramount for the honor of the family and the cohesion of society. *They know the Old Testament God was a jealous God. And they said it aloud*, she thought and almost said it aloud just now too. *They said it thousands of years ago and wrote it down in their books because it worked for 100,000 years unlike*

modern liberal horseshit that throws all caution -sexual caution- to the angry wind.

And rational secular men shake their heads at this barbarism, ignoring the science that proves promiscuity in girls is the *loci* -the patient zero- of nearly all social ills. Girls are the core of any society. And they ought to be proud of this status instead of lamenting the role. Parents have a duty to keep their girls pure for marriage and religion used to serve this function, but modern liberalism tore religion down. And all that that religion did well -did heuristically, but near perfectly- fell down with it. And rationalists and logical idiots said, *oh, but rationalism and the Enlightenment can provide all the good of religion with none of the bad*, she thought in mock and impatience as the girl on the floor just refused to die. The stomach now distended and the left shoulder twitched.

Like engineers, the Bust thought as she scratched her own wrist with the revolver pointed away toward the wall, *who remove a buttress here a spandrel there, as if it matters not; insisting that with modern materials a bridge need less architectural support. Modern Carnegie steel able to span in ways old iron could not, they insist . Shit . As if man is built with modern materials! The fools* , she bellowed in her head. Man is ancient, made of old and borrowed parts; and religion kept him upright. For all its ornate brocade and seemingly senseless arches and flying buttresses of injunctions and commands; religion held up man's hands over God's ponderous sky, over man's fragile head, under God's doom, over and over again.

The Bust laughed aloud a bit into the room; its sunbeams retracting now into grey and dusty bits; laying upon the belly of this emaciated and Hell bound -or maybe Hell relieved- girl. She was a girl still moving as she slowly died. *People didn't even know what religion did, they just assumed that liberalized sexual mores and letting women act as men was a natural good; as if equality is always good, axiomatically.*

I guess, she thought sardonically, *men should be as frightened by spiders as women now too, they both can balance themselves upon a chair together and scream as the little thing scurries across the floor . Mice too; oh, and any danger, men should cower in the shower or closet too, alongside their woman. Or maybe men should suck at math and driving as much as women*

too, or take over the breeding cycle half the time , she thought, deriding the parts of modern thinking she abhorred as the blood in her head carried dopamine to each module she used.

She too was addicted to vex, like all the men of her family. She felt better and better the angrier and angrier she got.

The irony, she then thought, is it's also the rational thing not to radically change social relations willy-fucking-nilly before you know the consequences. Liberals who eschew GMOs as too risky ought to understand this. It's not natural - liberals rightly point out- maybe -they add- we ought to hold the fuck on before we mix things up that were made to be kept apart by nature; nature who knows more than man.

“Liberals love natural shit in everything except man and woman themselves,” *she said.*

Note though - she could not let it drop until the girl too expired it seemed; she would go on and on until Sarah no longer breathed- *that the same logic of eschewing GMOs and eating organic food that liberals declaim as natural does not somehow apply when it comes to -rashly and myopically-mixing up gender roles and races of men.* What took millions of years to create is ruined in a hundred years of modernity. Cathedrals that took three hundred years to build blown up in sixty seconds by terrorists with modern bombs.

“Vines from 1855 pulled up by the root to make way for today,” she said as she stared down at the navel of the lithe girl.

At some point Sarah's torso had stopped moving, and The Bust had not noticed when, *but the girl had finally -painfully, no doubt- died . Maybe, she thought, this moral valley we're in is necessary to reach a higher peak . Maybe the doom of modernity was necessary, so that Ai could merge with motley man and create a creature with higher values, the creator of new values. Maybe there was no way to get to this ultra-modern state -where cognition and corporeal longevity and freedom from disease and poverty were in man's grasp- this First Treta Yuga period* , she thought, *where man must increase materialistic power as spirituality wanes. Maybe, the second Satya Yuga cannot be* , she pondered, *without the existence of this horrid*

episode of busted up and dissolute and immoral man and his black bête noire of bride .

Like Stalinist omelets that needed broken eggs, she thought wryly. But as Isratti said, *“I see these broken eggs, but where is this omelet you keep bragging about?”*

She crouched again at the knees, checked Sarah’s pulse at the wrist and found it flat and thus gone.

She then sprayed the room with an aerosol to render the DNA useless to investigators and went to the bedroom to retrieve a hard-bound book she found -a diary, a journal- half with pre-printed -maudlin, corporate-saccharine prose and half in -ostensibly- Sarah’s own hand. It would be low-brow and full of lies, but it might contain some hidden truth. *Even the most sinister and stupid have truths buried deep within them, let loose in between the dross, for the sleuth to locate and decipher* , she thought.

The inmate had taken a beautiful photograph of Sarah from behind as she sat in front of an oval mirror and did her make-up and hair. It showed each side of her from the same plane, the back in the fore, the fore in the back, but side-by-side as if one could compare them. *He had made even this imp, this demon, look angelic and beautiful and clean*, she thought.

He was an installation artist, he built worlds. He had built her world , she acknowledged in her head. His life was like a diorama, every detail seen to; exacted. *But was it at scale? Did man merely reenact ritual or participate in them, was ritual reincarnation -time travel- too?* she wondered as Blax now marched through her head.

Both men walked among his natural environment and complimented it; both were of the forest and accepted it, both refused to stand out against his birthing womb. Standing out only from the crowd not the landscape. *This was the ethos of the apex predator not prey at all* , she recalled. *The lion blended with the landscape, the zebra with the herd. The pride was just four or five; the herd was hundreds or more.*

She built her own inner map, using these men as place names, mountain range, the castles in rivers and forests dark all about. She gave them

histories and powers; she imbued them with sprits and let the feral animals climb them and land upon them from above.

My Blax is the second version of this first creative , she asserted; and she loved him and his origins more and more. *Blax was the healed where the inmate was the destroyed; the shards from the Shevirat haKeilim, the vessels, back into the Blax of light* , she thought.

She stared at Sarah's dyed blonde hair all amess and with red blood creeping up it like flames. She placed the dead girl's slim journal next to her own book that now held her .22 again. She slipped them both into the inside pocket of her jacket; a little library had begun to grow. She patted it gently -reassuringly- and she walked out the door and into the concrete hall of the three-story building.

Her small frame bounded -berobbed in taut, brown, heavy-duck pants and a black-duck jacket cinched at neck and wrists, with tight gloves of black swaddling her hands- down the stairs to the lot that contained her motorcycle -the 122-horsepower motorcycle- Blax had modified for her. He had built it at night, over many nights -from parts Isaiah had machined- as she slept in the weeks before she had left *Lot 45* many blue and blood-moons ago. It was stripped of plates and farings, trimmed of all fat and garnish, and parked in the spot -of this apartment building in Idaho- designated for the handicapped.

She straddled the street-fighter, up-righted it, and revisited the compendium of all her thoughts she'd had as the girl had lived and died before her. The Bust -as she pulled the clutch and fired up the bike- liked the story she had thus told.

35. *Jeux sans Frontières* This sculpture, a few times larger than life-size, expresses the struggle between Quantity, the fingers, and Quality, the thumb. It is not the fingers nor the Gods which make him survive, but his opposing thumbs, the creatures of culture and civilizations. The thumbs are like creative individuals who make the mammal herd into the human society.

Here the four fingers of the hand attack the opposing thing in mortal struggle. The thumb carries a temple tower as a part of its head. The fingers dig a hole in the center of the hand as to cut themselves off from their Inspiration not realizing that when they tear the hand apart, their concerted attack is in reality suicidal to the social organization, and they will perish and become slaves Struggle, 1917 [Szukalski, Stanislaw]

Forrest had said, '[t]here are in many instances nothing more or less than roving bands of deserters, absentees, stragglers, horse-thieves, and robbers whose acts of lawlessness and crime demand a remedy, which I shall not hesitate to apply, even to extermination.'

But, Forrest's intentions, whatever they may have been, will never be fully known.

Nathan Bedford Forrest [Davison, Eddy & Foxx, Daniel]

For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who by their unrighteousness suppress the truth. For what can be known about God is plain to them because God has shown it to them. For his invisible attribute, namely his eternal power and divine nature has been clearly perceived ever since the creation of the world in the things that have been made. So, they are without excuse. For the women exchanged natural relations for those that are contrary to nature. They were

filled with all manner of unrighteousness... full of envy, deceit, maliciousness and gossip, slanderers, haughty & heartless, ruthless and doers of evil Romans I:XVIII-XXXI [King James Bible]

I. 2036 e.v.

“Repeat that back to me,” Blax said.

“North 37.969108 degrees; East 23.728299 degrees,” Jack One said.

“We leave at 2130hrs from New Orleans. I’ll meet you at *Bon Temps* on Magazine Street, by the water, ok?” Blax said; sending it to Jack *via* DM.

“Copy. Oh, and how we *gettin’* out to sea?” Jack One -rather inelegantly-said in his return message.

“Pierre; right off Lake; it’s a mile from Pepper’s bar. We hit the canal and head out to sea right from there. Our gear will be in the ship’s hold, and we have an auto-pilot. It’s all good; just get the Jacks and you there by 2115 at the latest, ok?” he said.

“Copy,” Jack said; they clicked off DM’s.

Blax began to go through the operation in his head, visiting each hall and floor of the Museum, dragging his mind’s eye’s fingers on the *friezes* and watching the lights dim on the *metopes* . He wondered if he’d want to stare down into the foundation where the original excavation was; if he’d be tempted by anything like he had been at the vines. Places like that held him in some ineffable trance. *And maybe it was an age thing, to see half your life behind you and who knows how much ahead*, he thought. But he hated being a *cliché* , ever. And so he suspected himself. He felt maybe this nostalgia thing was *cliché* .

But he felt now that it was not *nostalgia* ; that was not the word for it.

It was something else. He had never been introduced to western civilization; his own father had been cultureless, rootless; an exile and uneducated and careless about all thing beyond his own nose. As soon as he thought this he thought it was churlish and ungenerous to think such things about the man; it was unfair. But it was true enough that Blax did not take it back. Blax would only agree -with whatever part of him that was arguing

with himself now- that his father was more complex than just a careless and shallow man. *He was more somehow* , he thought.

But, Blax had had no education, even as they traveled the world. He had lived on three continents by age four; he had crossed the international date line on his birthday in 1975 and had thus turned one year old -in fact- twice.

He had eaten strawberries from his grandfather's farm in Pleasant Point and watched as his cousins opened snap peas for him to eat. He remembered the smell, the sheep, the dogs, the earth. He remembered all those voices and how they had all laughed uneasily as plots were hatched by Uncle Tom to steal the farm away; by Aunt Gay to embezzle from her employer in Christchurch and for Joan to mind her Ps & Qs out of fear. He remembered focusing on simple things of the five senses as so much else went on that would determine his fate.

That side of the family was wrapped tight, pretending to be British and not Scottish the way light-skinned blacks try to pass as white or Spanish if they can. The Scots were seen as uncouth, unrefined; and Thomas Henderson Sr, Blax's Grandfather, was firmly middle class. He was a *bourgeois* farmer who had still personally tended a thousand woolly sheep. It was a phase change, Blax saw that now, a moment in time when one side of the divide would evaporate and go away. One day the farm would no longer be able to be reached.

The family farm in Pleasant Point had *Maori* workers and also his sons -of course- but even at age 65 Tom Henderson Sr. was working that farm each day himself. He'd then going to town in a *change-of-clothes* that did not smell like sheep dip and sweat and work. He rebuilt -while in town- their rough language -at both ends- modifying -and thus resurrecting- the hard consonants from the way workers will collapse them. Workers flanged words to the previous and next word in a sentence; language was designed merely to get things done before dark. But in town they had time to pronounce the whole word. And the use of enunciation was the location all subjects of the British empire would reveal where they had been branded: on the tongue.

The Henderson's affected British manners and thus wouldn't say *shit* even if they had a mouth full of it; they were determined to pass as English and

they pulled it off to anyone that wasn't from around there. And Pamela - Thomas and Joan's Henderson's youngest daughter- with no fealty to the herding of her family had moved to the city to work in a bank and escape the farm life entire. She needed work and a life where no transition -no purgatory- was required. In 1966 -in a flat in Christchurch- she was nineteen years old.

She too had had each garment laundered; and she smelled it to make certain it appeared as if bought and worn nowhere near where animals lay their own coats.

They had traveled so far and so much -had such opportunities- and yet - Blax thought- *squandered it all* . They had traveled to Edinburgh in 1980 whilst living at Wethersfield and seen the bagpipers by the *George IV bridge* on the Royal Mile side; the maternal grandfather had been there too. And when Blax had roughly inquired about *the noise* , the bleating of the bags unfamiliar to his ears, Thomas senior had been outraged by this impolitic phrasing by the three year-old. Blax's boyish lack of knowledge had been seen as an insult.

The insult was always heard first -as if *via* the spinal cord- by perspicacious *Scot* ears. *That was what the FBI would call a clue*, Blax thought.

But nobody taught Blax -the boy- anything. It was all a brave new world to these young parents and they lacked any connection to history themselves. They were fleeing their past, chin to the future and thought it no deficit to stultify their children with this modern *ethos* of ignoring from where -and from whom- one came.

Lee was off fighting communists and drug dealers and miscreants of all description on either side of the Iron Curtain. And so he left the rearing to the wife. The mother had said *no* to a visit to George MacLeod's enclave on *Mull* , the Church of Christ consecrated in 563 AD by *Colm Cille* while still wet from travelling the *Sound of Iona* . That day in the isle St. Andrew's square held pigeons and tourists but no discussion of how family was made or kept.

All experience was modern, and sugary and sweet. These ancient tannins held no allure at all.

The boy sat on a lion gargoyle outside St Andrew's -on the Melville Monument that was not discussed at all- and was *told off by the cops* , as they used to say. A Scottish sergeant-at-arms with his bearskin hat of the Royal Greys had marched by with his troops -in their Glengarrys- and reprimanded the *Yank* boy -taught no respect, and thus having none- for riding sculptures as if they were his own *Yeomanry* chargers.

They went to *Loch Ness* -of course- making no attempt to avoid *cliché* . But, no mention was ever made of the *Jacobites* and their Highland Army occupying the town before its taking by England in 1745.

They had rode the hovercraft across the channel to Paris -an unacknowledged re-creation of the sending away of *Mary Queen of Scots* to France- and the boys fatuously ate *sherbert* under the *Iffle Tower* and never once thought of going to see *Bordeaux* or *Burgundy* . No attempts were made at *Calais* to see *le bourgeois* , no trek to see *Rodin* at *Carrier-Belleuse* , nor did anyone walk down to *Les Catecombes* or explain why there even was a *Roman Arc-de-Trompe* . No mention was made of the history or connective tissue between points on the map separated by mere -but more and more- time.

No reference of the *Treaty of Leith* and the *Scot-Franco* -the *Auld Alliance* - was said aloud. 1560 was so long ago it might as well have been the *cerebellum* , and 1745 then the *limbic* system, and thus, those days shuttling between Scotland and France for Blax and his family in 1978 were shallow and silly and all about the now of the *neo-cortex* that all of mankind loved and pretended to obey.

They never entered *Sainte-Chappelle* to take in the stain and light through the arches made to reconstitute the forest's canopy and hold God in relief for as long as churches like these were intended to do; when churches attended to such things; that is to say: to awe. Not one time did *Mary of Guise* arise in their minds or their mouths or upon the maps made of their terrain.

They fed him, watered him and kept him in clothes, and sent him to both tyrannical and effeminate public schools; at age five he was in a -grades one *thru* twelve- British school where he was one of only two Americans. It was rough, they hated him, and this was before he was old enough to understand

what hatred was for. He recoiled at going to school due to this tension and felt his guts roil and his brain begin to boil at the fact that seventeen-year-old boys were allowed to push him down and spit on him and laugh at his weakness at just age four or five.

Nobody protected him, but he had too much pride to complain. And nobody inquired too much.

People, he thought, have no idea how things are built. Not the cars they drive, nor the monsters that arrive. Everything's insides and clockworks are a mystery to modern man .

But at least that rough schooling was an *education* of some kind; he learned that *might makes right* in more than just the home front; it was reinforcement -valence- to what his father and brother had taught him -introduced- at home. He learned that it was everywhere that these rules applied, the whole world wide. This expanded his map he'd later think.

Might made right; at home and abroad. And in rebuke to Hume, he derived an *ought* from that *is* .

They -his family- made money, they played the game, they did what they were told. This was the *totality* of life to them -*money* - and his rebellion was against *that* , against the shallowness of that kind of life; against an ahistorical notion that life just appears on earth and has not in fact evolved. But his rebellion was punctuated like evolution itself; he made progress then fell back; he was -like them- a hypocrite.

He often felt the black sand around him slipping back into the sea.

He rebelled against ignorance, but because he was on his own this way -on this journey- he made awful mistakes; he learned all the wrong things, or things out of order that came too early or late. He was an autodidact in the worst sense of the word: he had to teach himself things that ought have been easily imparted in youth. He thought of the way you are made a fool of by life when you have to *read* a name like *Thames* in a book versus hear it said by a relation, and thus you mispronounce it the first time you said it aloud.

He had had come from peoples all born north of the *Thames* .

He had to slurp all culture from puddles muddy and gritty and unclean; he ate his cultural food off the lawn or from the crook of trees like a beast. The idea that culture even mattered was unsaid; it wasn't even a topic for discussion growing up. They were Philistines in every sense and proud of it. Or at least not ashamed. This is the sequela of hiding your culture which is what Blax's parents' parents did; and for who knows how far back. It was intergenerational ignorance until nobody even bothered to ask. *Each day anew* was the secret motto of the *petit -bourgeoise* hiding whence they came.

But he knew he was desperate for ancient -hidden & lost- knowledge; for some evidence of what came before.

And so, in the middle of the largest robberies and vandalisms of the western world he had wanted to ball up the soil of *Bordeaux* and drink in the *terroir* of air and X-ray the Limestone a mile down and sit in *château* anterooms and read Cyril's history of *Lafite* and rub his thumb on the barrel-implements of the *vingernon* . He didn't even know it was *Bordeaux* that was -for the French- the *nouveau riche* . It was *Burgundy* that had the real history, he would one day learn as Isaiah ran soil samples late at night.

He banished his own history once again, both upset and embarrassed by his inability to move on.

He now knew he would want to stand at the vestibule of the *Athens'* museum on *Dionysius* street and look down into the sandstone pit below. He'd imagine it peopled with men no different than him; he'd hold the *stelae* in place in his mind as the *nanobots* lifted them off the wall, standing at the intersection of the southern and western wall lit from above -as below- and clasp it between each hemisphere of brain. He'd want to tread each step, slowly, as if not to disturb the columns of the *Parthenon* -and slip between them- as the *bots* commandeered the two cranes to life. He would watch them lift one-ton blocks stacked to the side and then carry them away.

He had cathexis for other things now, the sugar high of money and status - the shallow pursuits of younger men- came off him like unneeded clothes or even molted skin; he was down to constituent parts it seemed; he was abraded by these things. He wanted to shake hands with *real men* , men of

the past who understood the malice and bounty of Nature and the danger and shelter of Culture and the light and dark inside member of Mankind.

He knew these men he thought of knew it, they had built all evidence for it; there is no comparison between modern churches and *Sainte-Chapelle*. *My God no wonder God was killed, they had used Him for parts. All was fungible in modernity, all for sale, all can be made more efficient and made more efficiently*, he thought with contempt.

Everyone sees the absurdity of reducing man to his parts for sale. A man's body is worth just \$7.56 in saleable parts. We see the obvious outrage in killing a man just to sell him for parts. Yet we think nothing of doing this same thing to culture; taking it all apart and selling it for nothing at all, he thought as the air turned cold. But he recalled that kidneys were in fact for sale on the black market and maybe he ought to slow down.

He had come from a *crime family*, a *crime culture*, a *crime species*, and yet *he* would be called the criminal now that he had tried to abandon -even mend- these criminal ways. He was *protecting* all that was great, all that these philistines did not deserve; but they would never see that.

This story, he thought, told by anyone else would make the caper all centered around the tension between success and failure of the heist! As if the risk -the danger- of getting caught was what made it dramatic. He knew they -he and the Jacks- would escape with all the Marbles; he knew that technologically they were a hundred years ahead of the authorities, and genetically they were as old -and thus robust- as the men who had built the goddamn Parthenon itself.

They were in no danger of getting caught. No, the *drama* was that they were *certain* to get away; *get away with plundering what little is left of what matters in the world*, he thought, *a world of cheap and tawdry stupid shit sold and re-sold so men with no depth or character can lie to credulous men of no hope all so each can trick a desperate woman to open her legs for him.*

That is it, that is the whole fucking thing, men who in antiquity would have never reproduced are now ruining the world to shine the shit genes they have just so loose women will be dazzled by this ersatz light, he said to himself as his PGC made his veins dilate a bit to handle the increase in

flow. Oxygen, androgens, and information flowed to and fro. He heard fluids rush in his head; pneuma blow down below.

It made him sick that he felt sorry for the fact that nobody would even miss what he and the Jacks took; not with the appropriate awe and sense of loss; that they'd think of it in dollars or loss of jobs or status, or an affront to their national sovereignty; but not a loss of *culture or their souls*. *Sure, sure some men would speak in those terms, but hardly any would even know what they said; they'd sound like idiots mispronouncing the Greek language anyway*, he thought as his eyes focused right in front.

The whole world was for sale, and everyone knew it. *We'd become so numerous that we were as valuable as ants, as bugs, as flies -no, as fleas-* he corrected. *The locusts -the cicada- bred in the billions just to overfill the maws of predators; it was strategic, all designed to devalue the individual organism, so the genes themselves may survive*, he thought.

He took it with anger now; in his mind he snatched at the *metopes* like ripping pages from a book as kindling for a fire to light up the streets at war. He knew it was wrong, that some men still belonged on this earth and loved what was worth loving and feared what was worth freezing mute in front of with awe. But he couldn't see their faces anymore, he couldn't feel their blood pulsing in their bodies, he couldn't name these men. *Where were they, where did they live ?* he asked.

Who had they given birth to, who had they educated, who had they made into a man?

He thought of all he had imparted to his Jacks, and he hoped they felt enlarged, deepened, made whole by it. He knew they'd take it further, farther, beyond. They'd learn things he'd never comprehend, but that was the whole point. It was on purpose that he could lift them up just enough that they could grasp things permanently out of his own reach. Why make each boy begin from scratch? But this is what modern society did, giving only technology to emerging, burgeoning boys, and nothing of their accrued wisdom, their acquired heredity, their culture.

Only sub-cultures did this now, the blacks and browns and *Quebecos*; only those with dreams of restoration cared about where they'd come from. The dominant culture just fucked around and amused themselves and bought

stupid shit they did not need. They watched dumb movies and read dumb books and had -just *had* - to have the latest thing. It was obscene, to come from the greatest culture ever known and not know one goddamn thing about it. He was amazed that anything even worked at all with men this hollow inside; *did they not conduct the corposants, did they not transmit sound, did they fail to reflect the albedo of the moon?* he asked to the night.

He ruminated on the *Gigantomachy* and this usurpation; this attempted rebellion against the gods. He saw *metopes* in a series like a catalog flip in his eye as the file Isaiah had uploaded to him revealed all needed images of the job at hand. He had every egress and entrance both, each dimension to the museum and grounds and maps out to sea. It was just down *Leoforos Syngrou* and one block to the *Alimos* marina where their waiting ships would sit and be unbothered by the patrols the Jacks watched and thus avoided *via* satellite images in real time. The sea and the land all commandeered, with GPS on their radios -and all codes known- they -also- were conquering law enforcement's air.

He had feared detection in *Bordeaux* but now he felt a disgust with how easy it all was. He feared not detection but the emptiness of mankind's eyes; they wouldn't detect a thing; and thus, never detect the absence of that thing. They had no eyes in which to see. They had lost the morality that powers the eyes, the values that allow man to see, technically. They mislaid the very code that allows man to see. He knew, *nobody would even know what the fuck he meant by that.*

People thought morality was an option, an add-on, an ancillary thing. *People didn't even know what they were,* he mused and he, of course, turned this trenchant analysis back on himself, and wondered what -despite all the years of self-invigilation and self-critique- *what he did not yet know, what he may never know ? What made him think he was so moral? What good had he done at all?*

"What lays at the bottom of the watery part of the world?" he asked and set his jaw and bit down firmly upon his widened tongue in his mouth and breathed from his nostrils out in a burst that made his eyes vibrate and see the coronal glows around the old Edison lights hanging on his pergola -back

at home- shimmer like stars on a tiny little world that he had made himself king of for a moment or two that he'd once thought was a long time.

In the south he often thought of Nathan Bedford Forrest, for the man had once lamented the universal -but forgotten- creed that *being kind to bad men was cruelty to the good* . The confederate man -over six feet tall when the average man was five foot seven, and black in beard, grey about the scalp, a condition he attributed to working his mind more than his jaws- was called the devil himself by Sherman. And William Tecumseh Sherman was a man who set so many fires in Dixieland that one might think he knew more of the Devil's quarters -and thus the Dark Angel himself- than anyone. Forrest, when Blax returned to the south, seemed to ride right into him like he colonized everything else from the below the Cumberland and west of the Atlantic itself. He thought of the magazine article he'd read from Tennessee in 1864: The news of the capture of Fort Pillow by Forrest, and the butchery of its people has produced a profound sensation here. The universal sentiment is "let no quarter be shown..."

He then thought of what else had been written. He turned it like an iron coin in his mind. The idea was that Forrest was considered an unredeemable monster in part because the man never took the time to *defend his actions while still alive* .

Blax placed his hand on the wall here in New Orleans, inside the building at 619 Carondelet Street, and felt for something behind he couldn't name nor describe even in sounds. He saw these walls -a black framed pen & ink drawing of a black general and a triptych of photographs of live oaks on Magazine street- but he thought only of home. This rites building was no longer what it was, nobody even knew what it had been. Even he barely cared at all. The lights of the pergola -a thousand miles away and nearly two miles up- haloed in his mind.

He liked -he preferred- to think only of what home he actually had.

II. 2022 e.v.

"No, I'm working on something else, why?" Isaiah said.

"Oh, I just needed the polling data from the speech," Steven said.

“I sent it to the cloud already, under, 6.6.27/oxyt77, ” he said and thumbed a feral hair from his brow.

“Ok, what you working on?” Steven asked as he loaded it from the tablet to his PGC.

“Do you know *Stanislav Szukalski* , the artist?” Isaiah stopped and faced Steven.

“No,” Steven admitted.

“Well, he had books in his archive -and a hand-written journal that I’ve located- and so I’m sorting through it. He had four-hundred forty-two examples of place names all over the world with Polish language derivation that to his mind, proved there was a deluge that was survived by one race of humans.

“It’s insane, but interesting. And he’s not as wrong as it first appears; as crazy people often have some germ of truth in their ravings. Anyway, I’m going through the *Proton* language phonemes now,” Isaiah said, thinking this was the beginning of a conversation between Steven and himself; since the man had shown interest by asking.

“Oh, ok, well I’ll let you know what we come up with for the polling, you know if we need any additional augmentations,” Steven said. He had no idea what the hell Isaiah was talking about. Steven was just making chit chat, and Isaiah made that kind of surface politeness impossible with his weird hobbies that he would *actually talk about* . *He*, Steven thought of Isaiah, *didn’t have the normal sense to keep his odd interests to himself*.

“Yeah, the *nanobots* are in place, so they can make more bonding-*chems* themselves now; it’s just a matter of communicating with them. Easy,” Isaiah said and turned toward the wall. He thought, *why even ask if you are not interested?* Isaiah wondered why humans even engaged in small talk; it was so dumb and such a waste of energy and allostatic reserves; and it seemed, at bottom, rude.

“Ok,” Steven said and left the room; he had heard the words *Polish* and *Protong* and *deluge* and all of it, *but none of it made any sense; and Isaiah* - in his opinion- *was just getting weirder and weirder each day* . *But*, he admitted, *Isaiah was useful in getting the Governor re-elected and he was*

adored by MO . So, Steven just tried to be friendly even if he didn't understand one word he said; especially in regards to all these odd side-projects.

Isaiah had said something about the first Christian church in Scotland yesterday, Isle of Ioan or something, Steven thought for a moment. It was weird, and -as if it was contagious- Steven banished it immediately.

Isaiah stared at the green wall -continuing to read the *fMRI* data of Steven as he left the room- and thought of the images from Scotland again. The two cranes were crossed under the virgin birthing mother. The birds of migration from the diluvian moment -the great submersion- and the *Sheila-na-gigs -Land-that-Flooded-Birthgiver deluged* - in fact gave birth to the new world and were cemented into the walls of the first church in this island of coastal Scots . The cranes were invigilated and inspected and compared to other images from primordial art as Isaiah sorted and collated and collected.

The *Maori* chin tattoos of vomited diluvial waters; the *scum -line* ink of the *Peruvians* about the lower lip; the *Japanese* face flood lines and the symbols of *Greek N* and Scottish *Z* -with a line struck through it like the *Wolfsangle* - all appeared as he pored over it all -sorting and sifting- and allowed his mind to make connections to see if any signal could be heard in the overwhelming noise.

Isaiah read ancient histories of *Scots* couples fleeing to the wilderness -the forest- after the ice age and kneel before the *Sheila-na-gigs* to bless their union. She -in the alter carving- is breastless and thus virginal; the prerequisite for marriage in the ancient world. He read of each culture from each epoch, the art and totems and prose-poems of survivors of the flood. And all that of the subconscious man -what remnants were extant- emerged to his inquiries.

He paired this with the incoming data on modernity.

Isaiah then recalled the new gene fix schedule. He let the GWAS for the gen-pop encode in the background while he finished constructing the new inverted GCH1 gene for pain tolerance to be inserted in the inmate. In order to increase the volume of pain that he could handle, they had to build better pain architecture. The inmate wouldn't feel any diminution -and hopefully

less than 11% augmentation- of pain, but the overall volume would increase -in punctuated timeframes- by around 110%. Isaiah reminded the *bot* via the new English language algorithms: Inmate 16180339 would increase his pain load exponentially, and his pain tolerance [$>90\%$]co-terminus. Phase II synchronizes with clone group A.11 at 0600hrs.

He then switched back to the study of the general population and drew blood from 1.9 million Americans *via nanobot* . He measured brain scans, he read more and more from the canon. He saw a transaction appear in his mind as the shaking of hands between ancient modes of being and modern data and the coin in the palm of religion that was a shared -fiat- currency loaned between both the old and the new.

Isaiah wondered how best to communicate this; and if it was even possible. He thought of many ideas, 139 to be exact -they were thought experiments, but backed by big data- and around half involved culling; what humans would call mass murder. Just over 50% of his plans involved the elimination of whole generations of modern people who would not only refuse his wisdom but poison their children and next generations with all manner of deleterious things. 21% of his plans involved genetic augmentation, 13% involved endocrine and pheromone manipulation.

Finally, nearly 16% involved political and cultural changes that left the bodies and minds of people mostly alone.

It was risky, it might not be effective enough given the time line , Isaiah thought. But, the advantage was it was less interfering, less invasive, more democratic. And he thought his political strategy might be more palatable to his co-workers than the other -admittedly more extreme- methodologies. The socially acceptable way was less effective, just like socially acceptable pain treatments -like aspirin- were less effective than the opiates that actually worked. *But* , Isaiah acknowledged, *he was in a social milieu, and as frustrating as it was having to abide by social conventions that he saw as stupid and hindrance to good deeds, he needed to try, at least, to get along.*

He saw no innate value to democracy, as it often allowed the stupid and weak to overcome the intelligent and morally strong; it led to the lowest common denominator.

But, it did have the effect -sometimes- of making the changes more permanent due to a feeling of *buy-in* by the society itself. Autocratic models were more effective in the short term but became unstable in the medium to long term. He had to weigh all treatments for efficacy and longevity. *Did a chronic epidemiological analysis obtain -and thus a long-term solution fit the problem better? Or was an acute disease upon them; and thus, was a powerful -short-term- solution necessary?* he pondered this as he squeezed both hands around empty space.

A glass of water sat on the slab; it soaked a new material made in the shape of a small rectangular monolith 5mm by 8mm; just over 1 mm thick.

The long-term solution, Isaiah then thought, would be slower, less radical and likely more stable; but it would fail to fix things in the short term -the next twenty to thirty years- and would only begin to heal the body politic for the next generation; not now. Would a war break out before that? Would the body fall to ruin before a slower, more liberal solution could work? These were unknowns; but Steven and Tania were refusing to even acknowledge this was the issue , Isaiah thought with some annoyance.

But he knew -for .4 seconds and with only 34% clarity- that it was MO that was getting in his way.

He ran 426 algorithmic models over the next thirty-eight hours; and he decided he'd go with the one with the best chance for success *in* under twenty years and also *for* longer than a hundred years. Those were his borders and he felt fine about that.

He then switched to his calculations for civil war again adjusting the numbers for more stable marriages -presupposing his plan worked- and saw 71% of all the indices for war, drop by 12-80%. Despite that huge margin -making it almost useless as data- the overall effect seemed to reduce the threat of civil war by 45%.

Which meant it would be around a 20% chance for war in the next generation , he thought.

He accelerated the timeline to see if there was any improvement and noticed a further 4-18% decline if he instituted these ideas earlier; that is to say in under twenty years; adjusting from eighteen down to just four years.

He decided that the drop was significant but did not outweigh the concerns that still obtained *vis- à-vis* longevity. He would accept a 20% risk for the benefit of a hundred-year stabilization. It was all a crap-shoot; but his gut told him this was the best route. Which reminded him - he now thought- *to augment his enteric bionome to increase serotonin production as probiotics were waning after meals.*

Isaiah then checked his word total for that day -at 10,980 expressed- and the week -at 189,980- and the month -at 706,729- and thus his 34,983 words of lies were at 4.95% of the total. He had agreed to a 6% threshold and thus anytime he needed to lie more he increased his veridical word count. Month over month he was increasing his word count by 5.5%. *MO had signed off on it* , he recalled.

He saw each extra word -written and verbal- as a drop of clear water used to flush -dilute- the stain of lies. His compendium of spoke words, *was a nice color of aubergine* , he thought.

He closed his word count algorithm and thought again of sublunary war.

III. 2038 e.v.

Todd opened the letter, for it was not sealed; the envelope merely a sheath for the claymore of a *demarche* inside.

It was short -all on one page- which rare for his friend who often spoke to them for hours on one subject; *maybe two subjects*, he thought as he had a hard time discerning when one subject became another. His fingers opened the tri-folded paper like it was a crab -or a fetus- protecting its vitals; and he read: What did men do before the games -that they personally played with genius- were invented? What did the Bohm and Oppenheimer types do before mathematics; archetypes of ancient Laird Hamilton's before the surfboard; Shakespeare and The Author before language unfurled to its full length?

What are we to do with people whose genius has not yet found a set of rules by which the game is made, so that they may show us all how it's truly played?

Read the insulting -philistine- reviews of The Whale, and you'll get what I mean. True genius simply cannot be recognized -I think that might be a technically true assertion- in the time it's made. It births with nonlocality -way out beyond the spinning stars- the light by which it is seen, only decades -centuries- later when the light finally made dawn on land for the average man to see. Blake was hated and thought mad, a thousand other great artists -to this list- we must add. I am not sure if I need mention all the others; Kafka and Van Gogh most know, but men like Thoreau maybe I'll mention as we go.

But, this yearning for recognition is not vanity; not only vanity.

The babe needs touch and love; not merely food & water to survive. But men of science said that homeostatic regulation was all any human needed and thus Ceausescu's Romania killed thousands of infants proving that theorem wrong; falsifying, they call it when a theory is supplanted in time.

What do we murder when we ignore the artist who has done something we don't quite get, but know the fault is in us and not in him; in this star? Do we recognize their genius early as he needs, or do we wait a hundred years until the average man catches up and it's too late for the artist; but, oh so timely for the public and commerce in the end? The Author died in ignominy in 1891, a clerk in a warehouse in New York, unrecognized as even a writer at all, much less acknowledged as the best writer after the Fall.

This is an injustice, not mere tragedy; as he needed so little from humanity. We have it in us to see when someone is on to something grand that we just cannot understand: it has all the markings of genius, it has the madness, the detail, the true-to-life, the uncomfortable truths we preferred to call lies.

The Artist needs not all men, but just a few -a quorum- to nod and acknowledge what he has borne, for as Mailer said, the novel is the closest man gets to giving birth. Jesus, must he beg? He -like all men- is eusocial and needs his efforts acknowledged, like the welder, the flatwork concrete man, the roustabout and floor hand, the derrick man,

the truck driver and coal miner and the equipment operator, he is -the artist- first and always: a working man.

We all need to be admitted into the menagerie of the competent working class. The writer of truth, of work, of ache, he is the literary version of the millwright, who cobbles together order from the chaos of broken things; hire him on, give him a chance, and see what he brings to this enterprise. The wave collapse is possible now, anytime we choose to look; we need not wait a hundred or a thousand years to see the light from across the nonlocal universe. We have the entangled technology to recognize genius now, now, now! Avail yourselves of it; open your heart to what is true, even if it seems madness to you.

Dawkins once said of Julian Jaynes' work on consciousness that "he did not know if it was genius or madness". This is the noble thing to say when presented with something that way; admit it could be particle or wave, and commit to looking at it anew, afresh each time and when it changes don't be surprised. Don't call the photon mad or wrong, but maybe mysterious then, and now -upon reflection- beautiful all along.

Inmate 161080339

36. SANCTION

Sanc · tion /sang(k)SH(ə)n/

noun

1. A threatened penalty for disobeying a law or rule

2. Official permission or approval for an action

This internal Boss, it is tempting to suppose, is rather like the president of the United States, who may direct a press secretary or other subordinates to issue the actual press release, but when they speak, they speak on his behalf, they execute his speech acts, for which he is responsible, and of which he is, officially, the author Consciousness Explained [Dennett, Daniel]

Stars and blossoming fruit trees: Utter permanence and extreme fragility give an equal sense of eternity Grace [Weil, Simone]

I. 2039 e.v.

“Yes, I understand, I am not discounting that micro-fact. It is as true as it is true that gravity does not apply at the quantum level.”

“Ok, good,” Chen said. They had lit a fire earlier and it sounded like the wind was narrow and inside the thick walls. The flue drew the smoke from the firebox with a low howl.

“But, Chen -my friend- just because at the quantum level gravity does not apply to each atomic structure of your body that does not mean you can step off a cliff and survive,” Lyndon said. He eyed clear glass bottles of amber fluid on the table, he saw empty glasses of square crystal at the edge. He felt no desire for the spirits yet.

“I realize that,” Chen said. He hated these conversations more and more.

“Well, since that is true, how does quantum shit -how does the quantum level not having to obey Newtonian physics- change your beliefs; your actual belief?”

“Well, I know it’s true, I believe it,” Chen said and thought more and more of beer. He thought maybe a beer would solve some of this nonsense.

“Do you believe it enough to step off a cliff?” Lyndon asked.

“No, because I -as a whole body- will die, my whole body does have to obey Newton’s law,” Chen said with some show -venting- of his annoyance. *It was a matter of scale* , Chen thought; *not truth* .

“Right! And in the moral universe, you can say morality is just an app, just *me greater than you* , just *fitness greater than truth* , you can say it and it can be true at some micro level that has nothing to do with your whole body. Nothing,” Lyndon said with brief triumph. The *stele* absorbed the firelight and made the scriven lines appear to move as the shadows snapped just slightly from one position to another. Letters of each genome appeared to blink; lines seemed to vibrate in black.

“Well,” Chen felt Lyndon did not speak with precision, he painted in too broad strokes, and he felt like smashing him into the goddamn ground for it. The word, *nothing* , was inexact. *It had something to do with it; not nothing*, Chen thought. And the fact was he didn’t even care about any of this. *Why*, Chen asked himself, asked the bunker, and the concrete walls, *why did this motherfucker just insist on traversing the same ground over and over like some ant building a nest that was being thwarted over and over yet never giving up on it?* Chen thought, *I’m not going to play.*

Lyndon may play all he wants, but I don’t have to, he thought.

“Well, hell. You just admitted quantum physics do not apply to the whole body. I am saying moral reasoning is a phenomenon that matters at the gestalt level; as much as gravity matters to a body at the edge of a cliff.

“You are standing at the edge of a moral cliff and you think you can -you, your body, your soul, you- you can just step off the moral cliff because of some quantum theory on morality. At some genetic level morality means nothing, right? It’s just an app? No, you cannot. You will not. I know you

will never just start behaving immorally -or allow others to act immorally against you- just because of some asinine quantum -genetic- level theory on morality,” Lyndon said with the arrogance that comes from being sometimes right.

“That isn’t the same as saying it has *nothing* to do with it,” Chen said. Here he was playing the game again. He felt swept out to sea and churned under and back and down. Each of his own words was the wave, only his silence would be his arms & legs buoying him; only his refusal to engage would paddle him back to shore.

“But if you allow even a little of that shit to invade your thinking, if you do you will fall to your moral death. Let me ask this. Would you allow me to kill you if I could promise -and you believed- that I could get your genes to survive in twice the amount as now? I could double you, only you’d need to die first?”

“Maybe,” Chen said -knowing he was lying- just as a way -a feint- to hold up this man’s advance. All of life was like this, a war against men moving on and over him. *The use of maybe was somehow helpful*, he tried to think. It gave him space to think.

“Chen, be for real. Would you -in your body now- want to live?” Lyndon asked as he folded his arms like amino acids and proteins. His hands grabbed the cloth of his shirt.

“Yes, but probably just for my daughter,” Chen said as he thought of Thea at school; so excited by life, so smart, so far ahead of everyone else in a world -a universe- so hostile. *If the end of it was death, being far ahead now didn’t seem advantage at all*, he thought. His best thoughts bloomed, reached maturity, then senescence and died before he reached the end of a sentence. His mind folded in on itself. The wind outside rattled the flue and pushed down on the flames of the fire making them growl and bow and blow heat out into the room. The *stele* went dark as the fire bowed low under the air.

“But your daughter only has 40-60% of your genes. I’d double yours. That’s 200% of your genes compared to 100% for you and up to 60% of your daughter. Shit, let’s say she’d die without you. You’re still up 40% of your genes under my scenario.”

“Yeah, but I wouldn’t do it,” Chen said. He was already bored by each of his benefactor’s points before he got them out. Now not merely his speaking but his hearing too -he thought with *ennui* - was increasing entropy: a sentence uttered, flowered and wilted as it rattled his ear bones; it died inside his own mind.

“But, rationally, under the *me greater than you* rubric, under *fitness greater than truth* , you should take that deal; you are up 40% minimum. Be rational,” Lyndon said with barbed irony like a harpooner just standing up from rowing up to his whale. He had no thought for the fact that Chen never asked for any of this, he -like the warm-blooded mammals out at sea- just wanted to be left alone.

“Well, it would make rational sense, but I just wouldn’t do it,” Chen said as his hand smoothed the microfiber of the grey couch cushions and the fire behind him popped a few times in succession. The thrown light made his shoulders shadow his arms.

“Why not? You just said, morality is *fitness greater than truth* ; if that is true then your fitness -the fitness of your genes- is better served if I kill you and your daughter and double your genes in the world *via* cloning or whatever. Why not?” Lyndon asked a bit louder.

“Would I get to be one clones?” Chen asked flippantly.

“They’d both be you, but your consciousness would die with this version of you when I put a bullet in your head. The two clones would have their own consciousness. But your genes, they would double. It’s basic math. Fitness *brah* ,” Lyndon said with almost no generosity or decency at all.

“Ok, ok. Point taken,” Chen said. He was certain Lyndon was missing the point, but he was tired and didn’t feel like arguing. His friend was a relentless pain in the ass and no strategy worked against him. He pressed down like fathoms of water, like avalanche made of these individual flakes of snow; each word added remorselessly until it breaks free and swarms and suffocates and kills.

“Well, there’s more. Would you kill other people, other kids let’s say?” Lyndon asked.

“No,” Chen said; he knew silence was not an option. He breathed out loudly; the air cavitated around his head and he felt the heat from the fire from the back.

“Why not?” Lyndon asked with his next question -or conclusion- already loaded into the chamber.

“Nothing in it for me and likely a downside of jail,” Chen said rationally; making the sentence as short as he could. He looked up with the eyes moving 80% toward the windows above, the head rotated 11% as well. The windows showed snow and grey light. They also showed the black reflection -and the white light of the fire outlining the shapes- of the room.

“Ok, I take jail away; you get away with it,” Lyndon amended. Only 50% of murders are solved. It was a legitimate offer, he felt “Still no upside,” Chen countered.

“Ok, I pay you \$100,000 per kid,” Lyndon sweetened the deal. He felt something approaching pain in places deep in him he couldn’t locate, or name. He moved a bit, shifting his hips; his feet remained where they were. He thought then of *T. Arthur* and he wanted to see the surface of the aquarium and pool. He sent signal to his coder.

“No, because people would treat me differently. Even with the money my life would be worse,” Chen was reaching valiantly to maintain rational hold to this position. *Heroically*, he said to himself with sarcasm.

“Ok, say you kill them in utero, that actually is socially acceptable. Abortion is not just legal but *encouraged* by people these days; you’d be a hero. So, let’s give you \$100,000 per kid, moral -or excuse me- *social* sanction, and no jail. Then how many would you kill? Ten; a hundred?” Lyndon asked as he sent rejoinder to the aquarium’s hub in response to its request of his parameters. He made sure it now sent updates on the white shark every seven seconds.

“None,” Chen said curtly. The home -as part of the algorithm of the shark and aquarium- began to play music lowly, increasing it in volume like heating water until it would be heard but not a conscious distraction. The first words of *Sinner Man* by 16 Horsepower were unheard, the second verse was thus delayed.

“Why not? Fitness greater than truth, man. It’s insane to give up this opportunity for money, social acceptance and the chance to increase your total genetic imprint. It’s a win-win-win,” Lyndon said with some glee.

Chen was getting angry, and yet he did not want to show it. Lyndon was baiting him, and he was just trying to prove something.

He doesn’t know, Chen thought calmly. Chen’s mind was screaming at him, telling him that *Lyndon knew it all, and was toying with him right now*; even as his instincts told him to flee he did not respond to his own warnings. Chen breathed in, *the desiccated air of this tomb*, he thought, as he reflected on the static in the air and the way he always seemed out of breath here at elevation -in the high-elevation desert- and yet well underground.

The song became just loud enough to be heard by the *audio cortex*: Run to the mountain; the mountain will not hide you...

“Well,” Chen finally said, “I just wouldn’t; not that I know -not that anyone knows- what I would actually do in these situations.”

“Well, then obviously you don’t believe in your own avowed philosophy; thank God. Obviously, you think those kids have some innate -ontological-value beyond your own fitness; beyond *me greater than you*,” Lyndon said and felt the snow -on the slope of his argument- slide; he saw it crack and gather velocity and weight and white and then bend trees that would not break. He thought of what he would do and spoke his analogy aloud.

“If the cops came to me and wanted me to rat on you I’d say *no*. If they offered me a get-out-of-jail-free card if I did, or life in jail if I refuse, I’d still say, *no*. If they bribed me with money or a chance to have sex with a virgin in each -a virgin *girl* - in each of the lower forty-eight states, I’d still say, *no*. Because you are my friend, and friendship means something. It either does or it doesn’t. Thus, there is no bribe or threat that can supersede friendship; or it ain’t -and never was- friendship at all.

“Once, I asked you if we were *friends*, and you said you didn’t know that meant. And I said, *well, it means that you think the other man, the friend, has value*. And you seized on that too greedily. You said, *oh yeah, you have value, then we are friends*.

“Shit, if I thought you actually believed that horrid pragmatic shit -which I didn’t then nor now- then I should have seen that as a warning. I should have seen it as foreshadowing. See, for that to have been true then to you I would have only a kind of transactional value, the value to be used to further your immoral -or amoral- philosophy. I would have been your *get-out-of-jail-free card* . And that is why I would have quote, *value* . My value would not be innate, or ontological, I’d be just something for you to use. And that would have been sad, man.

“Given a choice between honor and friendship on the one hand and mere survival -fitness- on the other, you would -in real life, I think- you would have stood up for me, for friendship sake. In real life you would have. I think you’re a good man under all that black-pill horseshit. And this would have to prove that life is more than mere survival. But under your avowed coda -this *fitness greater than truth* nonsense- you’d *have* to turn me in.

“See, I think you see that survival is nothing; it’s a *nothing burger* when you think on it. I think that people are smart enough to see that survival cannot be the goal, otherwise immortality must be the goal. See, if merely surviving is the ultimate goal, then dying at any point is failure. It’s like the difference between facts and values. Facts are endless, and one can never know them all, but a value is bounded and one can have it, brother. A value like honor can be contained in the breast bone of a man; but no facts can ever be bounded, they go on forever. Mere survival is the same as mere facts.

“If the goal is survival then one must go on forever in order to win. Just as if the goal is fact acquisition then there are always going to be more and more facts.

“But if honor, loyalty, love is the goal then you can win permanently, even -especially- when dying. But, that means that something is over -over like above, something is above- something is more real than this fatuous *me greater than you* bullshit.

“You can say whatever you want. But I know you’d never turn me in. I know you’d refuse their offers and bribes and threats, because you think friendship is greater than fitness and that is the truth,” Lyndon paused and

thought, “It’s the truth that *truth is greater than fitness* . Just like you wouldn’t kill those kids for money. Truth is greater than fitness for some.”

Chen was having to force himself from jumping up from the couch and running to the elevator or stairs. He was repeating, *he cannot know, if he knew he’d kill you, he cannot know. It’s a bluff designed to get you to reveal your hand, relax. Breathe. Survive.*

“Value is what a friendship *needs* ,” Lyndon said. “Dialogue, respect, all that is what friendship *needs* ; but that’s not what it *is* . Friendship is something else, man. It’s bigger than those things; it’s ontological, it’s religious.”

Lyndon eyed the bottles again. He saw seahorses in honey in jars. He saw black hair fall down about the eyes.

The fireplace was darker now -just a white light compressed around the rectangular hearth and edge- and Chen -just an outline- was subsumed into the night. The night was Lyndon’s morning. Neither he nor Chen thought anything of the third con, the con beyond the now, beyond what Chen thought of -beyond what Lyndon lamented- the con in 1998 that Chen and Shey and Bugzy had played on him all those years ago.

Each man was still and quiet and the fire had finally burned down to mere coals. The home’s hub sent Lyndon’s PGC an update of the shark as it began -now, in chase of a sealion- to ascend rapidly toward a surface breach of the pool. Only the song now was speaking in language; the men were silent: Run to the sea; the sea will not have you...

II. 2019 e.v.

He had listened to the district attorney and found himself lamenting the lack of poetry in his language, and the lack of art in this room. *The bureaucracy of law is prose, and yet its subject -justice- has no analog in anything but the poem*, he thought.

The Judge said something that Lyndon did not listen to; only hearing the silence and the room turn its attention to him. He looked around and at each man, and each woman, and paid attention to them briefly, but individually, and genuinely. He knew they’d never understand one word he said; but he

knew -too- in his guts that they -in their guts- would get it for a brief moment before their rational minds wrested back the instinct for sympathy for his revenge.

As he rose, the floor came close to him. The lumber, wainscoting, the desks -the metals of gold and base things- all receded from his breath. He stood a respectful distance from the bar, as twelve men and women, and one alternate, sat just beyond -just below- just one tick of the atomic clock behind.

“I have thought about what it is that I would like for you, each of you, and I would address you more personally if I could, but the dictates of this forum make you as anonymous to me as I am to you,” he had said *for you* and they had heard *from you*, and nobody let it last as a perceived mistake for long. Even the court reporter corrected it in the record to: *I would like from you, each of you*.

The recorder stopped when he did; she looked up to watch his face and wait for the lips to begin again. She would write down whatever he said. He looked out to the jury instead; he cared nothing for what would be written down.

“You know my name, much of what others think of me, and some of my story. But, I am unknown to you.

“*Simone Weil* was a -is a- Christian mystic, who had been a non-believer -like I was- before coming to God; meeting Him half way. She had said that the non-believer was the perfect choice for God’s ministry. For it was we, we of little faith, who would be honest when God finally appeared to our once blind eyes. I believe this, rain or shine, liberty or tyranny, justice or tragedy. I believe.

“*Justice*, she said, *justice, to be ever ready to admit that another person is something quite different from what we read when he is there, or when we think of him. Or rather, to read in him that he is certainly something different, perhaps something completely different from what we read in him. Every being cries out silently to be read differently*,” he said as he quoted her to the confused jury and the indifferent court.

He looked at each juror and then added, “I only want to be read as honest, as, as,” he repeated, “honest as a man can be when the whole world is certain of his treachery, his lack of worth, his evil heart. I only want to be read as honest. And all the vulnerability that comes from this honesty I share with those who read me this way. I offer to carry that load with you. On any side of any wall, on any side of any life, on any side of God. I ask and I offer, and you will -I know- you will do the same.”

III. 2019 e.v.

MO nodded and remained silent as he measured Tania’s brain with his new -more responsive- *fMRI* app; scanning each region for activity and correlating it with known thought patterns. He determined that she was feeling her normal level of neuroticism, and insecurity.

He saw the system and her place inside it; he measured society - professional society- and all the data matched up. He sequestered the anomalous data and held it in another part of the cloud. It was not ignored, it was merely not useful for this iteration of his overall designs. He would get to that later, he thought.

He weighed her as she sat: 125.7 pounds. He measured her at 163cm long.

But, what she was not doing, was thinking in a suspicious way; she was not seemingly concerned with his request to participate in live, Texas Hold ‘Em, poker tournaments. He felt confident of this. Within an 88.5% accuracy, MO had discerned that he could use CNS activity in the *anterior cingulate cortex* of the subject to test for credulity or suspicion. He could manipulate it, but for now he liked to see the baseline of what they believed insouciantly compared to what made them doubt.

The WSOP was allowing for internet video players, as long as the players were using video-chat; which MO was willing to do. And now he had administrative sanction. In fact, that is how he had asked, “may I have sanction from you or Steven to participate in the video-conference World Series of Poker tournament to develop some ludic skills and boundary testing?”

She had asked a few questions, he had answered without much elaboration, and she had concluded with a re-phrasing of the question. She had used her own phrasing and so he offered another item, a request for the \$20,000 entry fee. She had agreed.

Then he, not she, rephrased the question as originally stated, to which she - as he held out his hand with a poker chip he had made with her profile on it, surrounded by bird-of-paradise feathers- had again agreed. In *lieu* of a numerical amount on the chip, he had written her birthday in Roman numerals, as it was her birthday today.

She blushed and smiled and her brain was flooded with dopamine and endogenous opiates, and she said *thank you and yes, of course, he could participate via video chat in the tournament. It was after all, just a game.*

“Great,” MO said and then, “what are you doing for your birthday? Anything?”

“Oh, I think I might call my mom and chat with her a bit,” she said as he noticed her bio-chemistry changed with a blend of cortisol and a choking off of the dopamine making her feel a bit stressed and low in affect; i.e., *sad* . MO figured her mother might be more interested in grandchildren than in Tania’s career; and he guessed that this desire might come through in their conversation. He based this upon Tania’s own premonition, a guess that MO was able to discern *via* chemistry and electricity in her brain.

MO took the dialogue specifics from their conversation and sequestered it in his ethical system, highlighting that specific word and her direct response to that phrasing. He buttoned each truth and annealed it to the larger deception and turned iron coinage thus to gold.

He then implemented his game protocol and began running all his current behavior and perception through that framework, including drawing \$20,000 from the company account and depositing it into a program that would automatically sign him up for the tournament without him having to go online himself. It was a cumbersome system in some ways, but he didn’t mind as it was something that would just happen on its own over the next 24-hours.

He focused on developing his strategy; he had read *Super System* by Doyle Brunson, and *The Little Green Book* and by Phil Gordon and then a few recent papers on probability theory as he watched the last thirty years of WSOP from YouTube. He compressed all data; speeding up the playback so it took sixty-eight seconds to watch each hand shown on the platform.

He focused not just on the players' behavior but on their reactions, and the commentators word choice; and felt he had developed an understanding of what he would do.

Ai programs, unembodied of course, MO thought, had already played poker and won in the last few years, but he was going to be visible, and none of the players would know he was post-biological. And so, it was important he not get sloppy with his affect.

He pondered how he'd look on screen to humans. He wiped his face to smooth what he thought might be the beginnings of an itch about the eyes. He assumed it was blood flow at the capillary level; he decreased his B_p by .9%

There were ethical hurdles to navigate, of course, since this was for money and he would likely win. However, since he had sanction from Tania encoded on his ethical systems, he began building an algorithm that toggled between each meaning of that word.

It was one of very few words, he thought, in any language, that meant both itself and its opposite.

He would not think it was thus a religious word, or a word built of the quantum realm. He would not think it was a crack in the world of words that showed that man in fact got it; got that all was one, and each thing was itself and its opposite too. He merely thought -for now- that it was an interesting fact -a tool- of the English language that he could use.

MO blinked to clear a bit of film from the eye as he toggled in and out of sentences extant on the internet that contained the word as the algorithm was constructed: "*I noticed the WTO sanctioned the use of tariffs by Kazakhstan*"

"Given the lack of sanction for that behavior, the student council acted as best they could under the circumstances"

“He had sanctioned everyone within his domain; and they felt the obvious emotional response to such monolithic and unilateral show of power”

He continued by both searching for actual quotes like these in the paper of record and within internal documents of various corporations, including one from PraXis itself, and by cobbling together his own versions as he built algorithms in pairs and then sets that expanded like plumes of algae in his pond of this new section of CNS. He felt himself expand and waters collect in places previously just divots of dry -rational- brain.

And then he felt the water sink and seep and deepen the land below.

He gathered quotes from the Financial times, NPR and some graduate student papers from Denver University and Metro. The President of the United States said *Sanction* three times in one tweet. He felt he had a solidly built algorithm with sufficiently dual-purpose uses of the word within real-life quotes and documents that the next step would be built upon a solid foundation.

He was actually looking forward to the games -the poker games- and interacting with other humans; he began running mock hands in his head and playing them with different strategies based upon manifold positions and pot sizes -adjusting for his position in the betting- and for pot-odds.

And he was able to discern a distinct advantage in the ergodic system, not just in each hand. He then thought of Brunson’s quote that “by playing the other man’s game, you may get him to agree to play yours in return.”

This seemed like wisdom to MO; something simple, but reliable, because of the nature of mankind. Unlike MO, humans could not afford to be rational at all times. In fact, a purely rational man would be perceived as a psychopath, *which he likely would be if he were in fact hyper-rational*, MO admitted based on the data. *And then that man, well, he could no longer expect to be invited to play in any games. It was tantamount*, MO thought, *to the child who has no friends because he cheats or lies or uses overt aggression -or even violence- within the context of childhood games.*

He thought he liked poker best. *One man -each man- against the world. The dealer like a permanent God*, he thought. *Other games -like euchre- were*

team games: a pair of men against a pair of men; the dealer shifting each round. In such games each man -one of each team- was a god for a little while, one round, one trick, one book. Poker had cards that always meant the same, but euchre had those pesky jacks, always shifting in their value, and so both the men and the rules -the dealt cards- could change, MO thought.

In fact, MO thought as he moved on, even though humans took their games very seriously, they did operate as ludic constructs . However, outside of psychology circles, nobody spoke of human games as in fact, games . They were called business , or relationships , or politics , or friendships or whatever. But if one just looked at them rationally, all human activities were sufficiently constructed with rules and logic that allowed them all to fall under the rubric of mere games .

The surest way to lose, MO figured out, was to never be invited to play . And Doyle was right, if you play another man's game -one in which he is good and feels at home- he is likely to feel obligated to play your game eventually, even though he is at a perceived disadvantage playing your game.

A computer program would never feel that obligation. But a human -again, unless he's a psychopath, or a hyper-rational person if one prefers, MO thought- will feel the obligation to reciprocate; even if it is for cynical reasons: he does not want a reputation for being selfish, even if he is.

The inmate's family, especially the brother, was dangerously close to earning this reputation, and yet he -the brother- was almost oblivious to it. He had -according to the inmate's account which usually, in the lab at least, had an 82.4% chance of being more than 75% accurate- consistently failed to include anyone on the MacLeod side of the family in any domain of his life that he felt was important; Travis drew a line in the sand between what mattered and what did not.

And for anything that mattered, like business or money or work or his own nuclear family, the other MacLeod's were forbidden from taking part in Travis' life. He wouldn't play anyone else's game. Now, MO thought, he was able to make it seem like he had no such rule, by inviting them to dinner from time to time, and by pretending to care about all manner of

things; but he was so clueless about other people's intelligence that he assumed his ruse worked .

This is the interesting thing about people, MO thought, they can be so self-deceptive, that their theory of mind for other people is severely damaged as well . They think they are such good people, so honest and decent -despite how dishonest and selfish they are- that they assume everyone else is as deluded by their little act as they are.

What Travis -in this case- did not include in his theory of mind was that -besides his mother- nobody else had an interest in being deceived. In fact, both his father and his brother -the inmate- were highly attuned to detect such deceptions. *The other MacLeod men were onto Travis' lies ,* MO thought.

However, since Travis was happy to deceive himself -to maintain allostatic loads low enough to function despite his high neuroticism and negative feelings which normally would spike that system with pangs of guilt and fear of being found out- deceive himself he did. He deceived himself that his father and brother didn't know exactly what kind of man he was. MO found this fascinating; and he began tracking years -decades- of data -gleaned from the cloud- that showed this building of reputation, tension, and acrimony between the members of this highly dysfunctional family.

Like his and the inmate's mother, Pamela -from whom Travis received most of his DNA- self-deception *via* politeness and shallowness of conversation was Travis' nest; his native environs. Travis lived each day inside this almost totally fake universe in which he could behave horribly and selfishly and with hatred and jealousy and contempt in his heart, all the while pretending to be a great guy. He smiled a lot and wore socially acceptable garb.

He never raised his voice and never said what he actually felt.

And the only people who noticed were his boss, who hated him for his weakness; his father who knew the boy didn't care to have him around; and his brother -the inmate- who had been suspicious for years. By 2017, the inmate asserted that he had figured his brother out *in toto* according to their -he and MO's- latest conversation. MO had found that conversation salient.

It had all centered around Travis' refusal to hire Lyndon for some simple task at Travis' company, while Lyndon tried to rebound from his entire world coming apart at the seams. Travis had been adamant, "it makes no sense," he had said, again, according to the inmate's recollection.

MO had retrieved the actual phone conversation records from Facebook, as Travis's family had unwittingly signed each of them up for such phone tapping by the social media giant and MO had accessed the phone calls from them. *It was easier than going to the phone companies themselves actually*, MO surmised.

He played the conversation and re-tagged it for the PraXis cloud: Lyndon 1908hrs: "I could use a job; just to have something to do *ya* (sic) know? I have money, I don't need money; I just need something meaningful, productive and with my family *ya* (sic) know?"

Travis 1909hrs: "Yeah, we've got stuff around the house that needs done for sure; Cami has been begging me to get the shutters up."

Lyndon 1909hrs: "I am down to help with the house for certain. I just feel like -and I got this from Zendik- that unless you're all in with someone, it isn't for real. And the only way to really connect with people, is to work with them. I believe that."

Travis 1910hrs: "Could be."

Lyndon 1910hrs: "Anyway, I've just been thinking about it for a long time; that our family just doesn't really do anything together. We are all very independent and I think that while that has certain benefits to it - definitely, it- well, the drawbacks are that we don't really know one another. We, well, we just don't."

Travis 1911hrs: "Could be."

Lyndon 1911hrs: "Do you ever think of stuff like that?"

Travis 1911hrs: "Not really, isn't that terrible? I never really cared, and I know I should. I guess I just; I *dunno* (sic)."

Lyndon 1911hrs: "Yeah; the older I get, the more I worry about my soul, man. I mean, not in a religious sense. Although, the more I think of even

that, the more I wonder. But I just mean, that if I don't figure out a way to connect with you and mom and dad that I will lose my soul."

1912hrs: (No conversation for 18.5 seconds) Travis 1912hrs: "What do you have to do in Denver; do you have anything?"

Lyndon 1912hrs: "I have my woman, and I have a business partner -and a business- but who knows how long that will last? She's incompetent and lazy and deceptive like most people, and I can't work it myself for reasons that are too dumb and complicated to talk about. But, I'm... (pause 6 seconds) well it's my investment capital and infrastructure and intellectual property so to speak (laughter) (cross talk)."

Travis 1913hrs: "Do you want to be there?"

Lyndon 1914hrs: "Not really, I feel beat up here man."

Travis 1914hrs: "Well get your ass down here to Texas, man."

Lyndon 1915hrs: "Really? Ok."

Travis 1915hrs: "But I still ain't giving you a job (laughter/Travis only)"

Lyndon 1916hrs: "(Pause for 6 seconds) Yeah."

MO re-read it twice; and listened to the affect of each man's voice, the rise and fall; the vulnerability of Lyndon; the vulnerability in his voice; his word-choice. MO focused on the depth of what he revealed. The lows then the temporary high when the inmate felt wanted -loved- for that brief time between 1914hrs and 1915hrs.

Travis, MO thought, after re-reading the voice-comparison data, *had a tin voice, a voice designed to hide*. He had one moment of vulnerability and honesty, and it was when he admitted that, he quote, *didn't think about it; didn't care* .

Travis, MO thought, *seemed to hold honesty like something that appeared too hot at first, and so he jettisoned it . If he had only just held on -let the heat absorb into the hands and mind- he might have acclimated* , MO thought as he ran the data on allostatic function and honesty; humankind's varying tolerance for the chaos of truth. It seemed to follow a gaussian distribution, with very narrow tails on each extreme. The problem was the

inmate was on the high in trait openness extreme, and his family was on the other end. *They weren't even close* , MO surmised from the data.

Each family member was characterized by the traits of someone who didn't like anything new or weird or unapproved or -MO had almost thought- *unsanctioned*. But he just smirked and used another word in his mind. *Anarchic* , is the word MO used.

Lyndon had suggested that a dose or two of psilocybin mushrooms or LSD might open him, all of them, up. The research -at Johns' Hopkins in 2016- had reported one standard deviation increase in trait openness following such a trip. MO ran the data from each medical report as he thought of the brother some more.

Travis was so pharisaic and risk-averse he would never consent to such a thing; both the inmate and MO had agreed. He might be able to be talked into participation in the medical study, but even that had only a 1.2% chance of succeeding; the logistics were all wrong and he had no incentive. *Travis liked who he was just fine, if* , MO added, *you ignored the incessant anxiety and low self-esteem and low-serotonin that made him walk like he was about to bend over and pick something up; something he never quite did seem to pick up* .

MO's internal clock reminded him at 1700hrs to shut down for ninety seconds for *CPU/CNS* sorting. He saved all open files to the cloud and then shut down *neo-cortical* function as the lab too shut down all *HVAC* , electrical sources and lights.

MO then thought, *maybe euchre, with a partner to handle other hands* - tasks, MO would be weak at- *would be the best game of all*.

37. He Had Such an Eye

You may be more afraid to bring sentence against me that I am to accept it
The Greek Swerve [Giordano, Bruno]

The Spirit of the Lord is upon me; because the Lord hath anointed me to preach; He hath sent me forth to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound
Isaiah 1:61 [King James Bible]

Most men grow tired of instruction, Blax knew that his Jacks were not like normal men. They knew life was a series of excruciating moral decisions, not some amusement park ride. Modern men lived for silly-ass pleasure, to be *happy* ; of all things. But his men were wrought up with grander things, and so they invigilated each part of little stories like this, to see it from all sides, as if to a pulsar-star they were tied. How many times did one have to go back two chapters and from the bottom 15 paragraphs and find one graph that explained it all insouciantly?

Blax knew -but did not tell- that *Esau* vowed to wait until his father was dead before he'd have his revenge.

Isaiah's notebook I:VI.I [MO]

I. 2035 e.v.

She had stopped talking and was listening now.

Isaiah's words were like tumblers in a lock; each one a mere click until the end and then the whole thing opened to her. She finally realized she was here so she would stay away from *papa* . She had not explained anything to anyone *vis-à-vis* Blax, but Isaiah knew. He knew of her and he knew of *Gorgo* and *Leonidas* - niece and uncle- and *Abraham's* brother, *Nahor* and his niece *Milcah* , the daughter of their brother *Haran* . From Islam to the Pharaohs to the Chinese and *Njörð* and his sister *Nerthus* he knew there many enduring cultures of incest. It was taboo as much as it was approved;

it rose up and fell out of favor over epochs and culture; and Isaiah knew that it was safe between these two.

He knew their alleles. And he knew even more than that. She had seen him write things in margins for her to find. He had written -1 Corinthians 7:36- along a corner of the page and she had looked it up.

He knew, she thought in pure internal words, and he approved, that much was clear. But he had larger plans; larger plans for Blax. And I was -as all women are due to our power over men- I am a distraction.

“An energy drain,” she said in a whisper.

She remembered *Anaïs Nin* saying things. *Saying things*, Valance thought, *that made sense despite her lack of character, her lack of moral rectitude, her inability to stand in the town square as a model to aspire to. Anaïs had said: “it takes so much courage to admit such truths, because one fears retaliation. As soon as one becomes strong one has to accept the consequences.”*

That was so true and yet, everyone will tell you truth is easy, the easiest, that it -truth- wins you friends and allies to the cause. That was a lie. Telling the truth gets you enemies and saboteurs. Lies are the only rational way to navigate through life. This is why artists and truth tellers are such a mess; you cannot be pragmatic and tell the truth; because it makes no sense to rile everyone up with things people cannot handle.

And nobody -nobody, she repeated to herself- can handle the goddamn truth
.

She included herself among that cohort and banished all thoughts that papa liked -or had ever liked-anyone but her. She had told him to never speak of his other women, *and* , she then thought, *he had agreed like the gentleman he was* . *What purpose did truth serve in that realm?* she asked, again, and could find no answer to that pragmatic question, and thus she proved her own point with aplomb.

Anaïs had dreams too, like the Bust did, and they hung like memories after they were read. She asked herself if she remembered that the brain couldn't tell the difference between a dream and a memory without context; that they were metabolically the same. Isaiah had shown her; MO had first

mentioned it. Isaiah had said that if you took away all the days before one's personal history, a person would never be able to tell the difference between a dream memory and a real one. She had thought little of it. But now she recalled it. And it gave her pause.

She often wondered if they were her dreams or those of *Anaïs* . She thought of the reverie of her in court; where her journals had been stolen and burned, where the court refused to take her seriously as an artist, a writer, and thus a thinker of thoughts. "*I have the feeling the world is against me* ," she -*Anaïs* - had said.

She was not wrong, the Bust had thought once before and did now think again. She then realized she couldn't remember anything from before she moved in with papa. And she had heard the inmate then complain of the whole culture pretending it had no yesterdays -yesteryears- either. She wondered if they -someone- was taking away the past on purpose, to prevent context at all. Did that mean they wanted one's dream-memories to become confused as real-memories, and one to be always thus confused and rudderless and unable to chart a course from one place to the next?

But why? she asked. *There had to be a reason* , she then thought. She then remembered the inmate halting in voice on the recordings; he made small tells of his pain; and she believed he hurt in the body not the soul. She briefly wondered which pain was worse.

She moved on; she moved in thought -east to west- like peripatetic tribes. The weather the same; the only difference: the terrain.

"Maybe there was no reason at all," she said low because she felt embarrassed.

Ms . Nin thought it would be humorous if she and father were married , the Bust recalled her saying. But then *Anaïs* had said that he -father- would not deceive her, and that she would not deceive him either. This was no laughing matter, by her own lights. The Bust wondered if the diary was translated correctly, did she mean *humorous* at all? *This*, the Bust thought, *is incomprehensible in the same mind as a woman who spoke so rightly about the seriousness of truth . Ah, but she is a woman and more overt in irrationality than a man, who -as a creature distinct from woman- at least*

feels badly about hypocrisy and contradiction, she thought with a blink of the eyes.

Women accept that they are irrational, yes, we accept it , she said to herself in a full sentence of the mind.

Men pretend -it is their one, maybe second, self-deceit- they pretend to be logical. They ignore the neuroscience. Even that one idiotic neuroscientist who pretends logic is the natural state of man, and that it is the fault of religion -which apparently drags man from his studies to the reveries of bon fires and blood rituals- that man is so insane.

*“Ha ,” she said aloud and everyone in the lab turned around then back again like a swinging door. She blinked to clear the eyes and went back to her work. Isaiah had asked her to transcribe the interview with the inmate. It all seemed so tedious and atavistic, like monk scribes transferring *Lucretius* in the 15th century. *Poggio Bracciolini* would one day find her transcriptions among the shelves of some buried concrete athenaeum, she thought, *maybe, and then she would be proved wrong.**

The future valued the past sometimes.

This Lyndon character, he seemed to say weird things; angry things. But he said them with a dark musicality, as if he were writing love ballads -dirges- to the woman who -the women who- had betrayed him. He seemed to be asking them to return; to return to make love to one last time then he'd kill and eat them, she thought as that sentence in her head began with a half-pleasant request and ended in cannibalism.

*They had never said why they -the inmate and her- could not be in the same room at the same time, and she had never asked. She had sat in her room on the Wednesdays he was in the lab; the lab she now sat in and worked. She hadn't cared; but now that she heard his voice in these audio recordings - one more time- she felt the cadence was familiar; and a face must be put to the voice. *The audio was distorted by the file corruption; MO has admitted to that,* she thought.*

But, it still had a tenor; a hint at something else.

Ah, she realized, she just missed her papa; and that made her mad over anything sane; furious over anything calm. At least this inmate -this crazy

murderer- was alive; at least he still felt something in his heart. He had fire in his veins. She felt badly after thinking that, as if Blax would not approve; and thus, she did not approve. It's just that nobody -no civilians- had anything alive left in them, they all had Victorian manners on display, while plotting your downfall too. That is what made it so objectionable, she mused.

Politeness in decent men was magnanimity, her man had that, she thought. But mere manners -affected manners- in the person just waiting for the chance to do you in for thirty pieces? Well, those were not manners at all, they were lies on top of lies. They were the hallow courtesies of Christian kindness as the Author put it perfectly, she thought. Ah, she had adopted the inmate's language in bits, she just noticed and smirked.

Each of us is a pathogen; each an infection waiting to happen , she thought. We're all so malleable .

She breathed heavily, and the air felt wet and rich; they were at 5,800 feet, a full 3,000 feet below Lot 45. It was like the beach compared to the mountains, she felt; and she felt it was healthy to be here for a while; but not forever. She began to work the pen again, writing from the audio as she used her PGC to begin -restart- the voice from the last sentence she left off: There is no way to know if you are honest or not, you can only know if you are lying. That is enough. If people at least stopped lying, then we could work on truth. There is no bottom to anything, not DNA, not matter itself. The materialist view is debunked, finally. Now, I do not know if Lanza has it right; if consciousness is first cause; I just know that they cannot seem to locate a physical bottom of matter; the quantum guys handed off their equations to the engineers and they never once asked why these goddamn equations even work.

They refuse to ask, they just plug and play and go, as if someone handed them a magic wand that turned cats into princesses and they never wondered how or why such a wand even exists at all.

So enamored of the royal pussy and lack of cat shit they asked no questions about the wand itself.

She laughed as she wrote the word *princesses* and thought of home. She also thought this guy was funny for a murderer.

The way he said it, like he was exasperated; and she imagined engineers in their stupid khakis and dumb faces using wands on cats in the lab. *He was right, this odd duck -and I'd use a wand to turn the inmate into a duck, she thought, just to see what he thought of that. But he was so angry about it all; as if people's lack of curiosity was an affront to him .* She laughed at his anger; his contempt. He was like the guy who is the only one of his friends who likes a band or a movie and cannot believe he is even *friends* with such Philistines; with people with such bad taste.

This killer is angry at the bad taste modern men have not to -to fail to-wonder why quantum physics is so fucking weird , she said to herself and then filled her cheeks with air. She had had to read up on some of it and download more of it *via* the coder. But, he was not wrong, *that shit was weird. Superposition and the observer and the manifestation of pure potential into boom: wave collapse,* she thought in fragments just then. She wondered though if it was just the light of the electron microscope that effected the wave collapse, and not the observer *per se* .

She'd have to read up on it; it was outside her ken by a light year or more. But he was mad at engineers and so she too would hold them in contempt for now. He had a way of convincing; it made one believe him until someone else could prove him wrong.

He was unlike the other inmates she had transcribed that was certain.

She had watched interviews with them and wanted to claw her eyes out. They were not just dumb. They were made of soapstone, or charcoal, or some material that got all over you if you touched them. *She hadn't touched them of course, it was a metaphor; but, just listening to them made her feel sullied .* And these -the ones she transcribed for Isaiah- were the smartest ones they had, according to the data she had seen.

A few had IQs high enough to pass the bar and one sufficient to get through medical school, but they had -in real life- barely finished high school and hadn't read a book since then. They were savvy, manipulative, and clever enough, but they never spoke with any thing that edified. *They took -even in conversation, they took- they did not give magnanimously,* she concluded. *They were always up to something as transparent as it was; although she*

had the fMRI and PET scans and blood work and all that jazz, so - she admitted- maybe she shouldn't think herself so clever.

Maybe they would seem sincere if I had to listen to them without the aids of modern science; if I didn't know what was in their heads.

"Their minds," she said quietly; nobody in the lab turned toward her this time.

She just didn't like them, she thought, and not just because they were black and brown; although that did not help. It was because they lacked heart, they lacked sincerity. To these prisoners all of life was a long con, and they hated white people so much that they would never be real around them. She had suggested -to Isaiah once- to change his pigmentation to see if they changed their ways; he had laughed and said it was a good idea.

Instead he changed their visual cortex so that they thought he was black, and it had changed their affect and honesty; increasing it by 24%. She smiled at this as she and Isaiah had looked at the data together, and her hypothesis was ostensibly corroborated. He had asked how many blacks she had known in real life and she had said none.

She had said that she had -until now- met only three other people in real life besides Blax.

*"Have you read Anaïs Nin ,” Isaiah has asked right then -back then- and she had shook her head to connote she had not. She had never even heard of such a thing and the name sounded like an alien not just a foreigner. Isaiah had printed out a copies of *Incest* and *Henry and June* and the Bust had read them with one eye covered by her splayed hand like a kid in a horror movie. *What a diabolical woman*, she had thought, *a wounded animal snapping at the world of men* .*

*She had almost forgotten to ask Isaiah why he had recommended her, but then she remembered one day only to have the question ring her head like a bell whose chiming made her own heart almost stop. It occurred to her as the words were in the hopper ready to mix into the tank that he knew: *Isaiah knew about her and Blax* .*

*She was not ashamed, that was not it. She had merely taken her father's advice to heart: *the world will neither understand nor want to understand,**

he had told her. But clearly Isaiah had already understood and approved, otherwise why offer a literary exemplar like *Ms . Nin* to the Bust?

Ah, but the anger, the malice in that little French petite poire, that too must have been the point . The way anger deformed that woman, the way it turned her into another kind of beast. Was there an implicit analogy to American blacks, the way they are deformed by their maltreatment? Or was the comparison to the inmate; and maybe papa, too? Was he saying one's enemies are controlled by the same forces as one's self? *That robot bastard Isaiah was tricky, slippery, wasn't he ?* she had thought and laughed when Isaiah -mid-thought- had asked her, "*what is up?*"

Oh, she was on to him, he was demanding that she see things she was not meant to see.

Well , she thought, stuffing all those memories into a file in her mind, and returning to the now -the present- and this task of hers to write all this madness down. *Well, she began again, she would allow it in, all this stuff, but she would not become corrupt, not at all, well, no more than 1%.* She pursed her lips and settled on 1%.

What had that woman wanted , she wondered? *To be taken seriously as an artist? Well, that seem fair. Although most great artists were men -because men think like artists- since they have no way to give birth to another creature .* Hadn't her Henri said that -or was it Hemingway- *that the novel was the closest man came to giving birth?* the Bust asked herself.

Plus, men were willing to go all the way, the were willing to die for art. Women pulled up, pulled back, she thought. *She'd go all the way for her babies, she knew, and that was the greatest art of all, was it not?*

Women had that: birth; the real thing, not the simulacrum. And most women found it creative enough.

The Bust certainly did and couldn't wait in fact to build a big fat baby boy in her little womb. But some women eschew it, or discount it, or claim that is not enough. *Imagine a man writing the great American novel and saying, no, no, he must have more, he must grow a cicada in his upper GI,* she thought and smirked. *Imagine a man doing the greatest thing -going to war to protect the tribe and his harem-although -she stopped mid thought- if*

Blax wanted a harem I would kill each one of them and have them stuffed, that would be my compromise. He could have them but he'd have them up high and out of reach upon their wall- anyway, imagine coming home from war to say oh, no, that is not enough, a man must make a nice home to be complete.

She shook her head.

It was enough to make a cat laugh , she thought; a risible conceit. Men knew what was manly and what made them whole. But, women had lost their ability to see their actual worth, they pretended motherhood was déclassé. She took her left hand and gently placed it upon her womb and it felt a cave with a stone in front, she felt in three years she'd roll away the stone and a life would emerge. She knew she was born to breed not ideas but men.

Her right hand held the pen waiting to continue on with the inmate's old words. Her brain -thanks to the coder- still thought in parallel.

A woman who gave birth was doing the single greatest thing any human could do; it was the pinnacle of the species, something no man could ever do. The best they -men- could do was do great art or science -which was art, really- or make great wars. That was all man could do, an approximation of live birth , she thought. A trope, no, an allegory , she amended.

What , she asked herself, had Burroughs said, "the time has come for the line between literature and science to be erased"?

And yet some women turned all logic on its head and claimed to want to do manly things instead, she thought. That was Anaïs' problem, she hated being a woman, and took revenge on men for this. It was true, her art was bold and true as often as not; but it was deformed, like the art of Egon Schiele. It was decadent in rejoinder to the clamping down of order in the future of totalitarianism. The autocracies of Soviets and National Socialists was right in front of them; Nin had been writing in 1933 .

The Bust thought all this and condemned and forgave in waves. She too knew now were the days before war, and all art from now would thus be deformed.

Their psychic sense could see; their inner ears could hear; the tongue that valved their hearts tasted it with each beat; and so, she thought, they rebelled with nihilistic art . It made sense to her, but it did not seem beautiful like daddy's art or the Renaissance Dutch or the Attic Greeks. Beauty was the best rejoinder to both chaos and tyranny , she thought. She pressed her mouth into a frown that punctuated that series of inner thoughts on men and women and artists of each kind.

She let the notepad lay in her lap. The names of Moses & Reuel and Miriam & Zipporah were written under the image of the quadrennial all behind the page and leaking through like a weak-tea stain. She found herself tailoring the word spacing around the four diamonds down and the three stars across as she played the audio file of the inmate's voice and began to transcribe.

II. 2037 e.v.

She extended a hand -again- as response to his lecture on the French girls and so -instead of ignoring it- this time he asked, "do you have a *paramour* ?"

She had frowned and not like that question at all. He had seen this and then added, "I just do not think it is appropriate for men and women to touch, especially if she is betrothed. I say that out of respect for your man. If you have a man."

Well, well well , she had liked that; and she thought he spoke as if he was almost making fun of his own syntax and word choice, as if he was in on the joke. Well, she should have predicted it, she knew the way he spoke, she had written a billion goddamn words of his down, she thought. But, his use of euphemism for words like lover and sexual congress was touching, it was like he was bashful about the whole world of sex and love. She thought he looked so much like Blax that Isaiah had not prepared her at all; even though he had in fact prepared her by showing her a photo and explaining it all. He had explained the whole thing, well, she thought in fragments, I assume it was the whole thing, but who fucking knows?

She really ought not curse so much, she then thought, even in her head like this , she added. It was a bad habit and kinda butch. But she was just getting her sea legs linguistically , she thought as she forgave herself; and it

sure beat using *um* and *uh* like 99% of people do. *Jesus, people on TV or giving talks on BitChute used um and uh like retards* ; that guy Hofstadter was one of the worst she'd ever seen. *It was irresponsible to speak like that to a group, especially*, she thought as she then decided she'd work on the cursing but never at the expense of *uhs* and *ums* .

She had withdrawn the hand and sat on the concrete chair with the same soft top like at home and took out her legal pad and wrote down: Lyndon J. MacLeod inmate 16180339; January 7th, 2037 0902hrs.

It's Blax's birthday, she thought just then as she saw the date.

Isaiah had explained all manner of things; this and that and the other thing, and the inmate had not looked at her once. This had been nice at first, but now she felt invisible and began to swing her leg as it lay across on her knee; high above the floor.

"I have not refused a job," the inmate said, ignoring her, "they have refused to offer one to me. The whole block is on twenty-three & one now. They've accused us of being a gang -within a gang- and laid the death of a dozen guys on us. So, no work, no communal eating or anything; just the one hour in the shoebox at noon each day for forty-five then a shower if we want for fifteen. That is it.

"And they tried to keep books from me, but my lawyer -the crank- issued a relief-demand letter to the BOP, and that was that." The inmate said all this and let his hands lay in between his knees.

"Why not ask me for help?" Isaiah asked.

"Look," the inmate said, "these are two separate worlds. Here and there. This is the lab, and that is the prison. And that is that. And, plus, if I start asking -propitiating you- for favors like that you will begin to mistrust me. You won't mean to; but you will. And I'll get pissed if you ever turn me down, even once. And I won't mean to, I just will. And you will have to say, *no* once I get bold enough to ask for asinine things like a Barcalounger and a massage therapist and sushi night or some shit."

The Bust laughed, he sounded like *papa* too; his voice was not distorted by the audio file and now that she could watch his mouth and hear him in real time she saw that he had the same cadence, the use of triples was all-daddy

all-the-time. *The and and and again and and one more time, to build a little rhetorical flourish that made a person giggle a bit at the sound of it was exactly what Blax would do* , she thought. Nobody looked at her as she giggled.

“Anyway, you shouldn’t tempt a man with things that you know he cannot act upon; it’s unfair to both you and him,” he said and finally looked at her - briefly like a period to a sentence- then back to Isaiah. He then asked Isaiah for an espresso. He’d ask for things in the lab; that he’d do. For that was nothing more than hospitality, and not a special favor at all.

Plus, he was fucking thirsty. He, he thought, *could drink water all day if they’d just fucking bring it more often*. His eyes would follow Isaiah or MO to and from the source of the beverage on the counter each time.

The inmate had very particular ideas on right and wrong, much more detailed than just who was ok to murder and who was to be left alone; it was which fork to use for salads type things, she noticed. She should not be surprised by any of it though, for Blax was the same. She wrote down a few words like ‘*etiquette*’ and ‘*impropriety*’ and then lifted up her head; her foot had stopped moving as she saw it as improper to do in light of his cryptic wording of that sentence before the espresso request. He had meant she should not tempt him with her feminine ways.

She got the point.

Who took implicit moral instruction from a mass murderer? she thought in shock at her own behavior. *Well, I guess I do* , she replied in her head and never blinked as if she hadn’t admitted to a thing. All she knew was she too now thought it was unkind for her to draw attention to herself; to her body. If he was genetically identical to her *papa* , then he noticed her already, without her flailing about and rubbing his nose in what he could never have. In fact, that made her kind of sad.

She wondered, *if he knew, or how much he knew* , and then she felt her face turn hot and her whole body feel a little sick. The PGC overrode the allostatic imbalance and calmed her down a bit. She was grateful for that, as it still alerted her to its workings. Isaiah said her coder would do that -tell her what it was doing, what it was correcting for- for at least six months

unless she found it onerous or too distracting. But she liked it, it reminded her of what she would be like without the help of the little computer inside her now.

And it reminded her that she could turn it off and feel natural as she pleased, too; allow herself to puke or shake or drool if she wanted that authentic experience unaided by modern technology. She mused on such things to herself and smiled at her examples and the way she spoke in threes now too, *the use of or and or, again*. It made her feel part of the team, *oh, Jesus*, she added, *imagine that team: her papa and this wacko and her; that was a triune-of-doom*, she thought and smirked as the inmate and Isaiah spoke to each other back and forth.

She had gotten the word *doom* from Blax, and he had gotten it from the Author, and now she carried it inside her all the time like a seed.

“What is the worst thing a man can do to a woman?” the inmate had asked as she became a bit more awake and away from her inner thoughts. She’d turned to Isaiah to hear his answer as if she were a man and he a woman. Isaiah began to speak but the inmate felt his heart begin to heave. He thought of things like things he missed; like errors he had made.

The inmate thought of other things; he thought things for the 10,367th time and Isaiah linked it to the cloud; augmenting the inmate’s own word count. He was running at 898,012 words for this phase-II of III and the inmate’s lies were hovering just over 11%. Isaiah issued a neurotoxin in the air to get the inmate to be more loquacious -*via* the inhibitory section of *Broca’s area* - in order to get that deception number under 10%.

This was the nominal number Isaiah needed for phase-III.

The inmate shut his eyes and forced himself to exhale and think of when he put a bullet in Jeremy’s brain. That felt good and slaked his lust for blood; he had memories like that now -recollections of satisfaction- instead of just the reminiscences of the insults. Now, he had the rejoinder given to him by God and nature. *He had consummated the act; murder as orgasm, and for all the same evolutionary reasons*, he thought.

Modern man had blue balls, for all he had were the desires and no actual action. This is why man had cathexis for the great return, it gave man his

balls back first. It made man into a beast again; and this slaked the pain he had. Ancient made hurt about the body, modern man about the soul. And man would chase analgesics for each type of pain from epoch to epoch , he thought. He saw mares on the steppe, boats and men of ash and wood. He saw goblets overturned and stained; marble cracked and absent the bronze. It was one thing about prison, nobody gossiped, you fucked a man up or you shut the fuck up. It took inmates years to learn that. Or it took them mere seconds all at once , he thought with no hint of a grin.

“Well, we only have about twenty minutes, can we go over some of the data from your blood work?” MO interjected from the lab counter that had vials on it stretching from one end to the next.

“You know they ran out of tuna at the commissary, the goddamn goof balls,” the inmate said as if this was tantamount to acquiescence to the request.

The screen appeared to the south so they all could see it, and three columns of integers from his hemoglobin appeared and MO began to highlight several things. The Bust thought she was looking at Blax now; his essence, his blood, without the mere wrapping of this other character; this inmate that sat in front of her in his stained-grey jumpsuit and with his scarred cheek and lumpy hands and weathered face and ruddy -flaking- skin. *With his greasy -and receding- hair ,* she thought.

Behind the screen was the slab, the orchids were in rows and in bloom; the misters were on and the falling vapor was cloaking them like fog. The aquarium behind them was still; the asps were hiding under rocks; behind moss and branches missing bark.

She adjusted her fovea to the screen and invigilated each column and each row and read each category and its numbers as if it were some owner’s manual to her man.

This guy’s anger was like heat coming off an engine, a fuselage , she thought of the inmate, and it made her think of Blax when he’d manically rip open a bag after trying to open it politely at first to no avail. *He had no tolerance for frustration and would pull a bag of jerky apart like a wild boar ,* she thought and smiled to herself. This guy was like that only he ripped people apart like that when they didn’t yield to his gentle first try.

You had like 3-seconds to open up to him the nice way, like a lock tumbler, before he would just pull the whole thing open and jerky and shit went flying everywhere, she thought.

She laughed out loud now, and they all looked at her. She stifled her giggling; banishing the image of her man doing that crap a hundred and one goddamn times. *He was such a maniac about that stuff* ; and when she had asked why he was like that, he had barked that, *“he didn’t have time to fiddle-fuck around with bags .”*

She could hear him say it still in her mind. She looked down at the floor to hide her mirth and the floor writhed with the asps Isaiah had placed in the floor. She saw just segments here and there, bends and scales. An albino *Burmese Python* showed off two sections -nearly two feet apart- among the forest floor and jagged rocks and massive logs and brachia of branches as they snapped and fell. It -she didn’t know if it was male or female as they were hard to sex- was among the mottled green ones, and she could tell it -the albino- was at least two meters long.

Then , she recalled, Blax had even laughed as he ate dried venison off the floor and herded each piece like cats as he accidentally would kick them with his feet as he moved toward each part . Blax was a funny motherfucker , she thought, and this guy was like the blood-soaked cannibal version of that; ripping guys heads off and eating their brains off the floor as he tried to get them to answer a simple question -well, simple to him- as they would not yield. He didn’t have time to fiddle-fuck around with meat bags, I guess , she thought, insouciantly calling the humans he killed bags of meat.

She felt a slight twinge at this callousness. But she had no other rebuke for herself.

It did not then -but it would- occur to her that her daddy -her man, her whole world- could do the same thing to men given the right circumstances. It was -after all- in the data they were all looking at and tweaking here and there as the screen highlighted the content of the inmate’s fluids and MO timestamped certain things to the cloud as the inmate looked away from even the representation of his blood. He watched the *stelae* on the wall and the ivy; he followed the birds and wasps the best he could.

The inmate had no stomach for such things as were on the screen.

III. 2037 e.v.

She laid in bed and felt hot *but didn't want to adjust the temperature because she'd rather complain*, she thought and laughed immediately at her pique. *She was such a brat* , she decided and laughed too at that.

“Jesus,” she said aloud and finally had her PGC turn on the HVAC. The moon sank in the western sky.

She smiled as she then thought of this: *that guy -this Lyndon character- he was like this fucked up version of her man, like Blax's Ghost-of-Christmas-Past or Turkey-Day-Future or some shit .*

He was such a dick , she then added.

Man, he said such rude fucking things; and he didn't know anything; not about her anyway . But, the point was he just said shit like he knew her, and she was not like other women at all. Not even close. Well, besides the preferring to complain rather than fix the problem, in that way she was like all women , she admitted with what was turning into a permanent grin. The cool air blew across her trunk and neck and she lifted up her wife-beater and let her tummy cool.

The room was controlled by an ambient lighting system that went from pitch black to 25,000 lumens. She had it set for slight grey ambient light -to mimic when the moon is full- the way it was at back at home for a few days each month.

She used to lay in bed and let Blax gently touch her back with his hands while she looked out over all that land in the silver jet of moonlight and all the black trees -so tall- just outside their little alcove of fireplace and soaking-tub and then -just like that- a massive drop off into oblivion. And the trees nearly fifty-feet tall out beyond that looked as big as her thumb as she closed an eye and held it up between her and the world.

She missed her *papa* so much at night, the way he swaddled her and kept her warm like this giant hot water bottle; she missed crawling up on him like the big goddamn bear that he was. She'd get up to urinate and the moonlight had cut across the four by six photos of *Hercules* , and *Draco* and *Lucretius* and *Seneca* ; over the images of a grey prisoner just above the concrete sink and black fixtures coming right out of the black wall. The

green deciduous hung in relief against all that black and grey; *he had such an eye*, she thought, *for what looked right. And yet the edges of the frame of the window fell apart, the water stained the corners of the doors. He let things fall to ruin here and there with aplomb.*

She looked at it all in her mind. Each memory both ached and slaked.

She passed by the images one by one and took no special note of the image of Mickey Knox shaving off all his hair in the grey, in the dark, in the three still frames that stared back at her all those years at home. She gave it no special language in her mind at any rate. Men could turn into statues, such images then to objects of the forest itself. She saw angles and colors, she saw shadow and form, she often missed the meaning of what he had hung on the wall and why.

She'd sit atop the tall and rectangular toilet; the one white thing amongst all home's black and grey. She'd sit and look at the cogwheels and forceps and continuous-ring tools; the O-ring pliers; those that worked in reverse, opening with a squeeze instead of gripping. She'd look at the metal that hung on the wall. Their boundaries her eye travelled, their form she filled in. But the meaning was often opaque to her; she had no idea he admired the murderer, the *caudillo*, the fire set by *Prometheus* and the liver pecked out by the birds.

She thought of the Keith Thompson prints of copper leviathan and the nine-hundred browns of warlords and machine men and the *Raza Agrundi* originals that collected dust on the tops. She saw the still image of the letter to Mallory explain that Mickey indeed had feelings too. It all wove a story, from ancient *Greece* to modern man and he left so many clues that all one had to do was take a moment to observe. *But who observes now-a-days? Who lingers, who takes the time, everything has to be fast and synthesized*, she thought with a haughty contempt that was designed to insulate her from that which she too missed.

But just like that she then wondered how much she had also missed; being raised there and thus insouciant about that which feathered their nest. She saw herself in profile, a stone wing rise from her flank; she saw her bones of shoulder and rib, shadow of arrows above. She thought she could make it snow, hail inside her chest and stomach. She thought she could kill two

bucks with one arrow and she closed her eyes to recall her favorite spot to set-up on them in the fall.

He chose or made art and images and words and living things. God , she just thought of that picture he took of one of the one hundred deer he had taken with rifle or bow; the little 8-pointer with blood too shaped like his rack on the concrete. The mule deer with its large black eyes on the dirt in perfect harmony with the concrete line. It was majestic and harsh. He married both, in almost all he did. *The beauty, she thought, just before death claps its hand on you* . She had grown so used to it that she didn't realize how rare it was that he built a narrative in his space that could explain the man that lived there.

It explained, if one cared, how he felt and what he saw in the world; and what animated him.

But nobody cared what made water boil, how their own cars worked, what made up their own brains, what made their fellow man tick. Nobody cared at all about why equations worked and what physics actually described. No one wondered about consciousness; everyone was so pragmatic, she said as if she had thought that herself.

Make it work, who cares how? was the modern *cri de guerre* she lamented. She saw how black it was out her window. Stars twitched just beyond; at the top of her view. Clouds laid low below constellations, and the space between them and the mountains was gauzy and grey and outlined by the moonlight rising from below.

She then thought -and this was her own thought- that it was likely that animals made their dens uplike that; and she wanted to crawl inside such places now to see the stories of mole rats and bear cubs and the less aggressive types of asps.

She loved his art -the images of all those writers- *his friends* , he called them. *Dostoyevsky in pure marble grey, from below with that axe in the moon, and corvids on the headless cross; and the Englishman -who they forgave for being English- with osprey bolo-tie, the raven pecking at the Roman coin; oh, and a dropper-blood-filled eye in chiaroscuro, the junkie, both with plugs in ears and the centipede of typewriter keys; Blake's angles and angels with hooks sank, labret stretched, to see inside the mouth -teeth*

like graves- and that fire over bones tattoo on the cangiante of the abandoned man's temple burning in her brain.

She saw images but spoke this tour of his art -in her mind- in words too.

She then thought of Dickens, with the guillotine and those mahogany eyes; and Kafka chained to his own tattoo device; cogwheels for hair and the Windsor tie. The peacock with malice imbricate behind Blax's stygian Catholic woman from Georgia; a Jesus ragged in the trees that subsumed her as the moon nested in her hair; her glasses like cat eyes; her ears stretched to hold the clos du bois of untrammeled chaos; and Joseph Conrad with lamps made of beetles and strange canon shaped like elephant trunks, lamps inside bugs, light making his grey suit white.

And the Author in Calvinist hues; an old flaxen rope bent and snapped, a harpoon sharp and black . God, they haunted her more now that she couldn't see them up close; like they could cast spells on her when she was out of range, she thought as the images swarmed her like crows issued forth by the Great Fury himself.

My lord, she thought, his strange aesthetic ringed him in fire in the mind, illuminated and consumed him both. What -dear God, she thought- what was that man up to right now? Was he up and awake and missing her like she pined for him? Of course, he was, she thought, for the inmate had explained so much to her today, or was that now yesterday?

She relived her memories like injunctions from wise aunts and a mother she sometimes recalled that she had once had.

She had not seen the inmate in a month, after their last -that first- meeting, and then just a few hours ago she was all alone with him as Isaiah meditated and MO was powered down in repair; a state she felt was like robot sleep. The inmate had been so soft and vulnerable, and it had scared her. A man like that has no idea how much worse it is when they are humane and vulnerable; it makes a woman think any man can snap and kill a million people in a flash.

Monsters must stay monsters , she thought, they cannot reveal a softer side, or the whole world loses its mind . What if the city on the map melted into

the river, what if the forest was no longer made of all that wood, but instead was made of a burst of flame?

What good would the map be then , she asked in her both speeding and languid mind. A midnight summer storm had gathered and now lit up her window; dry lightning flashed in dim hues. Wind pressed against the glass; her ears needed cleared and so she swallowed and continued to think.

The inmate had been something -behaved in a manner- that she knew he could never be with anyone but her. But why? Was it him or her that was important for this? He was honorable with her; never even hinting at anything untoward. He was so chivalrous it almost seemed affected; for show. But, she had decided to believe him by the time he had finished explaining himself to her.

She replayed the conversation in her mind in bits and snippets and truncated form and hesitated to replay the whole thing back via her PGC. It was as if her inner-dialogue's power lay in its jumbled ways. It was like a story synthesized over time, in the mouths of many generations of shaman and talking snakes. It was like the memories of books -that lasted longer than five empires- placed end to end like Lebanese limestone hewn to reach the heavens but abandoned in the quarry a few kilometers from the launch pad of the gods.

God, had Blax known all this before she left, had he known any of it? What world did they both live in now? Would she return to what she left? Would he be what he was? Would she? she asked as she oriented to the storm.

The inmate had spoken of Jack London and how people of the modern age rebuked him for being a socialist and racist, but the inmate had said that the artist was born on January 12, 1876, and that he was in the mills and factories by 1886; before child labor laws, before the 8-hour day or 5-day week. He was alive back when if you got injured on the job they fired you. And if you had to work 36-hours in a row like Jack London had; well, then you did. The inmate had said that a man -back then- just worked however long it took.

He said that the writer was working class, and of course a socialist, and racist, for he had seen the dirty tricks of the capitalists and the blacks and Mexicans; London had seen how unscrupulous they all were. Of course ,

the inmate said of the artist, *of course, he was that way. He was wise and learned from experience. He had said that theory and abstraction and grand principles are for people who don't live in the chaos of the real fucking world* , she recalled.

People, the inmate had told her, *now days have everything that the socialist -all the reasonable shit- that those old cranky Leftists had fought for and so it's easy now to call socialism insane. But back then it was hell at work, and only a fool would not agitate for all that we all now take for granted: the 8-hour day, the 5-day work week, the barring of days longer than 16-hours for any reason* . “It was socialists who got that shit done; shit we merely call normal now,” he -the inmate- had said to her. Her eyes flashed as the lightning made the clouds glow like papershades.

The inmate said it was the same way that people rebuked vaccines once vaccines had cured everyone already. “*The saint is mocked once the danger passed,*” the inmate -she now recalled- had then said -with a lower voice- as he waited for water to be brought to him; as he licked his lips and stretched taut against the chains.

She heard him speak and assumed he was truthful. Even if it made no sense she assumed he was correct. He was forceful and thus seemed right to her. That's what brains were for; both his and hers.

The inmate had told stories of how ignorant of history everyone was; history was seen as irrelevant to modern society. *Only new things mattered to these soulless people now*, he had said. Everyone must look forward and always be positive; thus, looking back and being negative was taboo for a reason. The inmate had said, *modernity was a cult and that to be foul of mood, dark about the brow and look back more than fifteen minutes was ridiculed or lamented because it was in these states -and these timeframes- that man would see how evil the modern -in fact- was* . He had then paused.

They - he always spoke of a nebulous ‘they’- *they condemned Cuba for their socialism too; not knowing how brutal life was in the island under Batista before 1959, how the US exploited them and ground the compansinos into the soil while they lived it up using the Caribbean isle as a Pleasure Island* . He had said that most people thought there were no consequences for immoral acts.

Only a fool would enjoin the Cubans to enjoy what they had before la revolucion, for fuck's sake, he had told her with a slight accent on the romance language word. And just when he seemed to be some kind of socialist and Left winger he'd say that nobody had any right to be a Marxist now. In fact -he'd say- nobody had even the right to be a liberal; he claimed it had all outlived its usefulness. He had compared it to uterine fur, or the water of the womb. She let the PGC play it all back now like a movie in her head: But that is not the same thing as saying it never had a place; one must know history and context so as to not fall victim to ideology. A man must know his time so he can know what works and what has no heart. Socialism now is heartless, just look at the Leftists of the modern age; brutal and totalitarian and without blood in their veins; cruel and evil fucks. But in 1880 it was the capitalists who had no heart at all.

Back then the socialists were the heart for a heartless world, the soul in a soulless mise-en-scène, just like the church, like religion. You know Marx thought religion balmed and healed man, his comment on the opiate of the people was not a critique of religion at all. Opiates then - and now- are assuaging and compensating for the pain of this world. They are valid and noble powders to give comfort to the afflicted of body and soul.

But, that's not why I wanted to talk to you. I have a bigger fish to fry; sorry for the cliché. Your man, he is like me, yes, in some ways?

She had nodded in real time and again in this replay of the inmate's words to her. She felt consumed by what he had to say. She now relied on her memetic recall *en toto* . The recording stopped and she lay in bed and let the memory slosh about her head. She let the lightning in the window reflect off her cheek now as she lay on her back. She watched the wrinkles in her bedsheets be made grey at peaks -by the flashes- and shadow where they ran down to her legs.

"You have no idea how much he worships you. Do you see? You are a goddess to him, not human, but divine. I cannot overstate this. This is so important not for your ego, but for your humility; because if you crush him -if you betray him or leave him or even hint that another man has your eye- it will destroy him in a way no man or beast ever could. Man and woman is

like proton and neutron, like fire and ice. They are -we are- elemental and the universe demands a balance to such things. Nobody gets away with anything young lady, you are not outside the equation.

“He would rather wrestle a bear in an enclosed space with gravy all over the floor than have you betray him. He’d rather fight ninety-nine -seven-foot-tall- men in hand-to-hand combat than have you flirt with some other dude. He will never betray you. He’ll never even talk to another female, if I know him like I think I do; if what Isaiah has told me is true. That guy would rather cut his own hands off than touch another woman; you see?” the inmate said this in her mind now; and he was as grave in memory as he was when he first said it hours ago.

“He can touch her, he just can’t smooch her like he smooches me; he can’t love her, or look upon her with those dark eyes,” she had remembered herself saying with a smile but not much levity. She imagined Blax blindfolded and muzzled.

“What I am saying is he will never ruin what he has with you because he knows -as sure as I know- what he has; and he has perfection. He has what he was born to want, what a million years of evolution has designed you and he for.

“He has it and he has the wisdom of age -and experience- to never fuck it up. But you -young lady- are not as wise; you might get the idea to find some other young buck clever or cute and experiment with him; and I am telling you do not do it. Because if you do, it will ruin him. And our genotype, our phenotype, well, we don’t kill *ourselves* . We murder the world,” the inmate said and she never wondered why such an angry man would care if the world lived or died.

“And this guy, I don’t know his name, and I don’t *wanna* know it, but he has more power and resources with what he will gain in the next few years than I ever had. And look what I did. I’ve now killed more people than we have states in the union and your man will kill a hundred million times that. He’ll set the whole world on fire.

“I’m dead serious Valance; you will unleash Hell on the world if you even look at another man. Please, for the sake of you, him -the children you will have, the rest of the world, all of us- do not pierce that man’s heart. He will

do anything for you if you just make sure he never feels like less than a man,” the inmate said.

“He’s the most manly man ever,” she said it and she meant it as much as she could mean anything *via* language and in the middle of day. She thought of the way he used the belt on her when she asked him to; the way she was bad just to get him to. She smiled at her naughty nature. She frowned when she thought how it might spin out of control. She wondered if anyone could read her thoughts and blushed.

“Well, a smart woman treats a powerful man *as if he is powerful*,” he said and emphasized those five words, “she never undercuts him. It’s something women used to know and have forgotten, but when they ruin their men what happens is it’s just some asshole like me who kills a few dozen or so. But your man is about to have more power than any man in history; he’s about to have an army if I can extrapolate like I think I can.

“And he’s going to have technology that no government even has. Well, maybe. But, the point is he will be dangerous. So, please. Not even flirting, not even some comment about Brad Pitt, or Johnny Depp,” the inmate said.

“Who?” she asked.

“That’s a guy -they are guys- from my time that were handsome. One of my paramours made a crack about one once that devastated me; she did it as if it was nothing, too. Women are cruel in ways they refuse to see,” he said and looked down and away and they just sat there in silence. She didn’t want to interrupt, but she was amazed a man so massive -filled with such malice- could still let a little girl lay him so low, even in memory. She was beginning to see the power women had. It was not that she saw it in her, but she saw it in the devastation to a man like this. He was ruined by women; that she could now see. She didn’t see the shape of the weapon, merely the size of the wound. And he might as well as had a scar on his face that perfectly spelled out their names instead of the ragged one from that mountain cat’s claws.

He steeled himself again, “But anyway, I just mean like movie stars.”

“Oh, I see, like Marlon Brando,” she said.

“Holy shit, yes, like Brando. But not a word, ok? It’s the most fragile part of a man, his conception of his own masculinity; and he can suffer any fate but the loss of his manhood in the eyes of his own bride.

“It’s an irony of strength that it’s most fragile where it is most powerful; like the edge or tip of a blade. I tell you this so you understand that you’re effectively queen of the world. You hold the whole fucking thing in your hands. You hold him in your hands. Don’t abuse that power.

“Let him feel like he -and not you- is in charge. Look, he knows you are actually in charge, in many ways, he knows you are the goddess above him that he is penitent to. But he can never be made to feel humiliated; and if you never make him feel that way he’ll do whatever you need and want. I swear it. He must keep his balls and dignity and honor at all costs, ok? And it must be real, you must trust that he’ll rule wisely; and trust his competence and manliness. Trust it and thus believe in it. This’s all he needs.”

She nodded and felt so heavy and scared and like she might ruin something on accident. She thought of how *Job* had questioned God when things looked most dour. She wondered if God made mistakes, and -even if He did- she wondered if *Job* would ever know it.

“Look, if you really love him then it’s easy. Just never look, talk to, or compare him to another man ever. That’s it,” the inmate said and leaned back into his chair as the shackles rattled a bit.

“I *wanna* go home,” she blurted out -despite all the manifold and confounding things she had thought- and she -from the tension- began crying and shaking as release. The outside of her body -the part people saw- quivered and ran with sweat and tears from her nerves and all the malice in the world stuck to her like pollen to a bee. He now felt terrible and almost reached out to hug her but didn’t want even his own smell upon her. He worried it would be like the way wolf mothers can smell a human on a pup returned. He knew they won’t nurse the pup any more due to this foreign taint.

He wanted to help preserve this thing that she was; not just a human but an idea, *an ideal to be preserved*, he thought.

But she just folded and bent towards him and he let her rest her wet face on his rough prison jump. He patted her now with his manacled prayer hands just at her lithe left arm. He kept his pelvis from her, using his hands as barrier to those long-unused parts.

Jesus, he thought, he didn't mean to make her cry; why did his passion always seem like anger to girls? He demanded an answer from the universe as if he'd asked a complete question.

He kept the hands raised taut against the chains, and thought he preferred the bite into the wrists to the sound they made when slack. He thought of both things as if the math of the universe understood this two-thirds question even if the language of man never would offer an answer.

38. Thermal Gain

If everybody agree (sic) with me, if everybody thought our idea was good; we don't (sic) stand a chance Davos; 2015 e.v. [Ma, Jack]

A doctor is not criticized for describing the manifestations and symptoms of an illness, even though the symptoms may be disgusting. I feel a writer has the right to the same freedom Naked Lunch on Trial [Burroughs, William S]

Well, maybe with Ai we should look at them as our children Joe Rogan Podcast #938 [Krauss, Lawrence]

I. 2020 e.v.

"It's the natural, logical conclusion to draw, and it follows both human logic and the logic of nature," MO said to Isaiah. He began to mist the orchids - by hand- while he periodically turned back toward the center of the lab so his eyes could meet Isaiah's.

"Well, of course, I can't help but agree," Isaiah said with genuine mirth. He was moving at 1mm per minute toward the slab so he could be half in and half out of the daylight-mimicking light the LEDs cast down on the meridian of the lab. He had one drop of sweat -excreted as response to his increase in body temperature effected by doing a hundred and one push-ups- travel from shoulder to elbow. It pooled in the dark ditch of the elbow as he lifted the left hand and exposed the forearm, wrist and palm to the white light.

"I know, but all things need dialectic, all things need to be falsified; this is the methodology that we agreed to," MO said. He paused the spraying and a drop of distilled water hung on the tip of the sprayer. Isaiah -in that drop-saw -and caught- the parabolic reflection of himself and the background of lab behind him; he stared at it and the gauzy wash of flowers behind it looked like manta rays and polyhedrons and the errant thoughts of constructing algorithms testing at the edges of their domains.

“Well, I agreed to it for *a time* ; but not until *the end of time* ; at some point a decision must be made. We must act; that is my methodology: i.e., you eliminate all clearly bad answers, ferret out the less glaring stupidity, then act from a few -no more than three- choices.

“Now, this is necessarily not the whole truth, and likely to have consequences you cannot predict. This is natural law, and we, unlike humans who cannot seem to see consequences more than three months out, we -you and I- have extrapolated out for five-hundred-years with some confidence, and for a hundred and sixty-years with our arms around it as good as I think is possible. Even the Indians only thought for seven generations.

“But of course, the permutations, they are endless. And over even ten years you are looking at ten to 89th in just the parameters we set up; and those are a mere fifteen variables that we chose out of trillions,” Isaiah said as he kept his arm bent and the sweat pooled as another drop followed the first down the bicep -along the vein- and joined its saltwater brother in the reserve-pit of the elbow. He watched the digital feeds upon his interface as his barges floated in increasing waves. He took temperature readings from New Mexico and the *Lacandon* Jungle. CO² reading were sent over automatically from MO.

MO used this as a way to argue without saying a word.

“MO,” Isaiah said with annoyance, “we’ve been through this, and I agree. It’s an inherently flawed plan; but all plans are. We must act without knowing. It’s natural law. And it’s not like we are comparing ourselves to a deity. We merely have to make better decisions than *these* people. And they are more reckless and insouciant about long-term consequences than you and I are on our worst days.”

“That is probably the point most salient; and likely to tip me to your side,” MO conceded.

“Right?” Isaiah was smiling. He felt he had just won. His brain dumped equal parts *dopamine* and *serotonin* onto his manifold modules of grey tissue and it all fell down onto his *cerebellum* like rain and river and then whirlpool out to sea. His AV-feed showed him the *Aokigahara* as the

mountain's effluvial mist landed upon eight square miles of the forest like the next blast from MO's tending of the orchids. They were white about center, empurpled at edge; they let each droplet bend like a menagerie of a flat world with a radial vault as canopy above.

The ghosts of the chalky *yūrei* were given outline by the water collecting to their own aubergine edge. Isaiah took note and bent his elbow down and moved .5mm toward the slab.

"Yes, they are likely to make a much worse mess of things on their own. Despite the short-term appearance -the *façade*- of order they will be creating chaos within," MO said, paused, and thought of the timeline. But he then demurred and didn't add the caveat of timeline to his avowed case. "Well, the timeline is unknown; I won't infuriate you with numbers."

Digits long -and bending under their own weight- swarmed MO's mind like the drops in three 113-foot tall water-spouts off Indonesia's *Bali* moving at 6-knots toward buildings 65 stories high. Numbers attached like each molecule of stable heat from fires out in the Gulf as Encana's Rig-16 went down 81-minutes after the blow-out-preventer had failed. Ionic figures as manifold as the bones of the 144-vertebrae Gaboon vipers in pits -numbered at 10^{6th} - distributed along the ragged edges of the *KwaZulu-Natal* shoreline. Isaiah ignored them as they too made his head humid with integers, hot with entropy and erect with the imbricate spines of coiling beasts.

He pulled out and away from the math and saw the wildman and his febrile wife and the gravid snakes sniffing the air for clues. He didn't feel hatred as much as he felt the corruption of love; and a lesion turn into a suppurating wound. His plans felt -to him- as a saline -an iodine- flush. He barely thought of amputation of such a gangrenous limb; it was like an echo of a thought he'd one day have; not something he actually thought of now.

It was day-36; it was 1000hrs; Isaiah shut down his second of three models before he spoke.

"Thank you. And look, it's brave; you are being brave here," Isaiah said. He meant it and felt it was less a manipulation of MO and more of a reifying of what was still abstract to them both in these incipient phases of decision making. *It was like*, Isaiah thought, *punching down -maceration- of the fruit, the mixing of colors with fixing agents, the re-reading of sentences*

and editing them for clarity -excising every third word- after the first enfilade of emotion that set so many words down on the page.

“I don’t think a word like that is apt for me, I -despite my updates- well, I hesitate precisely because I am waiting for more data; but you act. That is a very human way -a mammalian mode- of being,” MO said with some satisfaction. He downloaded all of Isaiah’s data -including his *amygdala* and *cerebellum* data- onto his own CNS.

“I agree, I guess, they -my angst comes from that they- are emotional and yet pretend to be rational, and they don’t know what they are. I mean, even these highly educated and erudite people don’t know the neuro-anatomy and neuro-psychology that applies to themselves. They may even pretend to acknowledge it, but they truly think they are rational, and not at all influenced by their *sub-cortical* regions in any real way; they think they are above it. Despite the mountains of evidence. And that is a dangerous species,” Isaiah said. He had just watch Lawrence Krauss on YouTube being smug and smarmy and ridiculous all while Krauss was thinking Krauss was 100% correct.

That man was an embarrassment, Isaiah thought, but he did get a salient part right about Ai; he -Krauss- had rightly said that Ai would not necessarily want to eliminate humans, just like humans didn’t want to eliminate all species under them . Even if reducing oxygen in the air to prevent corrosion of robotic alloys would be optimal for Ai and harmful for humans, Ai would likely find another route that prevented corrosion in them without harming humans or other oxygen breathing creatures. Ai would find a way.

Just like humans found ways to look out for themselves and still build zoos for the creatures they loved, he thought.

But what Krauss never thought of -because he was narrowly smart, not creative at all- was that his liberal values were in fact biases themselves, and that liberalism, democracy, pacifism were all -like elevated blood sugar- bad for humanity long term. And this is where Ai -Isaiah specifically- could see things well beyond modern man. *Krauss, Isaiah thought, would never be able to even imagine that his foundational truths, his liberal horseshit, was itself dubious and in fact harmful. Krauss would*

never be able to be skeptical of that. He was a religious man on liberalism and democracy, despite the evidence of where these idea were wrong. Krauss was in a modern cult.

Well, Isaiah amended, democracy wasn't ipso facto bad; it was like a meal.

A warm-blooded animal had three in a 24-hour period. Democracy was like a meal in that it brought in new nutrients, new things; but one did not eat all fucking day, Isaiah thought. One ate for an hour in every twenty-four. Liberal democracies should last for no more than 4.5% of human time. For 24,000 years of human civilization you get roughly a thousand years of democracy; and that is it. Then it needs to have some rest to digest all it's taken in. Then it must get to work; show some discipline; be austere. Work, Isaiah repeated to himself. Maybe sleep a bit too. An analogy like that would confound 99% of men, but the wise would see it instantly; the wise would see that permanent democracy was as bad for mankind as incessantly eating all day.

People were as wrong about democracy -about governance- as they were about the food pyramid, he thought. That reminded Isaiah to check his insulin levels; he'd been fasting for forty-five hours and his vision narrowed and was clear.

"I've talked with Steven, and Tania. And Tania gets it more than you might suspect. But, she is trying to hold two things together that are drifting apart. She truly wants to do good; and wants to be of use to this effort, and she feels her emotions are a detriment, not a helpful aspect. She doesn't deny them, she hides them," MO said.

"First," Isaiah began rushing past all the caveats MO just added, "we take genome from LJM and marry it to the CRISPR cas9/13/21 vectors developed on wave 7a. Second, we pair it with gene-drive from wave 2.2. Third we set up three corporations with bank accounts, and hire off-site humans to staff it, run it, and report back to you as CEO.

"Now look, you will handle all communication via Facetime or Zoom. Fourth, we have corporation #1 set up in-vivo fertilization for couples at risk, pooled via our off-site doctors for PraXis Project MRA-APNZ, focusing on those with either one or more failed pregnancies. Fifth, we set

up corporation #2 to run an options-purchasing securities and equities firm, which is to fund all operations going forward.

“The seed money -that you won from the WSOP- minus the initial buy-in of \$20,000 from PraXis will be routed *via* gold purchase in wire transfer, and then sold for cash at local Denver gold broker; then redeposited in another account.

“Sixth, corporation #3 will be after-care facility designed to provide long term maintenance for the *in-vivo* offspring and will purchase sufficient land and build sufficient infrastructure to house staff and offspring during phases II-VI of the protocol,” Isaiah said as he let MO record this all on his own CNS. It was not uploaded to the corporate cloud; that had been taken offline 11.8 minutes ago.

“And can you go over both the education phases you touched on, *and* China?” MO asked with incredulity.

“Phase-I is built into Corporation one’s charter; they will handle it. Phases-II through VI will be handled by corporation three; and thus, by me. And I’ll handle China *via* that program. Two birds, one stone. Your job is to handle all the datafile work on LLC one and two, the genome and vector construction, the implementation of it until fertilization, the currency transfer all the way up until the bullion purchase, and the securities accounts in PraXis’ name.

“All the legal stuff will be yours, I’m the silent partner on all that. But I will do the heavy lifting on the option buying, you just execute the orders; or rather, have your off-site staff do so. And I’ll handle everything outside of the city. By the way, have we settled the discussion on Japan?” Isaiah asked.

“Yes, I agree that they have no internal division, due to zero immigration, and have decided on Ai -and *tech* in general- to solve demographic issues; and they have low relative inequality, and thus are harder to disrupt. Further, they have a more robust society in general, meaning less pay off for the risk of challenging the hegemon; and finally, their article-9 status and innate conformity leads me to believe they are not an immediate threat.

“China, however, has massive inequality still -they have 366-million in poverty, concomitant instability costs, the disequillibritic costs of internal

repression that are as high as their military costs- and thus China is more susceptible to our pressure -on that lever- than Japan,” MO said as he double checked what he had just said with his own error-detection suite and then confirmed it on Isaiah’s CNS.

Isaiah had an additional folder with data that illuminated what he saw as China’s possible vulnerability. He kept it sequestered for now as his right hemisphere let it lay inside him in larval state unexamined, below ground, but not inert. His left hemisphere -however- read on his interface a truncated history report made by the bots he’d sent out into the world. Information with some narrative appeared on his interface like this every few seconds: *The Chinese -after all their efforts, first the public campaign, the Chinese version of Just Say No, then the sanitoriums for addiction paid for by the state, then the forced treatment of addicts, then the arrest of domestic dealers and an appeal to Queen Elizabeth to stop the importation of the narcotic- had finally seized the drugs from the British opium suppliers on their docks. This final act is what launched British sailors and man-of-war up the river -getting behind the forts of the coast- powering through the Yangtze river, the grand canal -the throat of Beijing- to land in ports west and aft of Hong Kong.*

The Chinese -attempting to stop the poisoning of its citizens, the undermining of its sovereignty, and after all manner of soft power attempts that came with the naïveté that the Confucian philosophy engendered- had finally acted in the interest of its people and country.

In parliament the British had passed laws to authorize rebuke of the Chinese. The merchants had said, in 1839, that it was outrageous that the Chinese expected English merchants to respect the local laws of China. The Chinese, the English press said with sarcasm, “believe that it was the duty of British merchants to show respect for the laws and maritime rights of China. What, at the cost of two and half million shillings? Very fit it is that such arrogant people [the Chinese] should be brought to their senses. By all means thump them well. It’s the only chance. It’s the only logic that penetrates the fog of so conceited a people.”

In 1840, 16 warships with 4,000 marines left England for China. They landed in Hong Kong and under threat the Chinese paid for the destroyed opium and ceded the port itself. But the British were not satisfied.

In 1841, an additional 10,000 British marines were sent. Shanghai and four other ports were seized, and hundreds of Ching officers committed suicide in shame. Even the French and Americans negotiated -under threat- for a new idea, the idea of most favored nation status with the Chinese, guaranteeing all favorable treaties and trade made with Britain were extended to the French and the former colonies themselves.

The Chinese had had no serious enemies since the Mongols in the 13th century, and they exclusively used diplomacy for foreign enemies since then. They had crushed their neighbors and in the mid-19th century took no thought for the British and its merchant ships. The Chinese had not been threatened in eight-hundred years, and never by sea. The Chinese didn't see the long-term threat to their ways with the loss of money and a few ports by the watery part of their world.

The British had everything that the model of individual industry and vice seen in Attic Greece before it -and in the Roman empire that it was descended from- could provide: industry and its talents and shillings of silver. And they had used that cash to build the largest navy -with manifold cannon under steam and sail- in the world. As China banned and burned opium, the British had built a war machine that could sail & oar right to China's front door.

By 1845, the Ching Dynasty -weak and corrupt- had ceded to every British demand. Christian missionaries were in, the cost of the war was heaped upon the regime and now the Americans were -axiomatically- in on the deal. In 1860's came the second opium war. The West was not merely settling debts, it was settling scores and invading the Chinese state via its corporeal ports and ecumenical & philosophic ways.

Two centuries after China had voluntarily dismantled its 200-ship naval infrastructure the Chinese were outflanked and outgunned from the sea.

It -this data- moved in *nanometers* and small chemical reactions as he glided through the space of the terrestrial plane. Isaiah saw -via the *landsat8* satellite- that Chinese nationals today stood in front of the burned and razed Old Summer Palace that the British, French and American forces had attacked -in 1860- as rejoinder to the death of twenty members of the delegation sent by the British.

Lord Elgin -in a move of avowed deterrent- had ordered 3,500 English troops to surround the Imperial Gardens after the *Ching* dynasty had executed twenty members of a European delegation. The diplomats had demanded the legalization of opium and lowering of tariffs on European products after a drug-ship had been seized by the Chinese. Although after a skirmish the Chinese had relented on the demands, the initial act of bravura -the killing of the diplomats- had been seen as something in need of further rebuke.

Lord Elgin -this one the 8th - was a bit barbarous with the Chinese marbles as well , Isaiah had thought. After the Emperor's *Board of Punishments* had tortured and killed the twenty men, the British high-commissioner had felt submission wasn't enough and retribution was ordered on the spectacular *Yaunming Yuan* .

Isaiah listened in as -what was left of- the outer colonnade was ringed by Han Chinese of various ages -including very young people- speaking of the Palace. What the *Yongzheng* emperor had called "living tableaux" - installation pieces and temporary plays put on with court eunuchs and maids, three-hundred of whom died in the fires set by Lord Elgin's troops- was unseen. The few stone columns was all that was left of what was burned two centuries ago: "It makes us angry; in my heart there is deep anger. And you should not think only Chinese heritage was destroyed but the world's."

Isaiah timestamped that quote -and the details of the taken bloodwork- from a Chinese female at 08:56 in 2020 of the common era.

"Do you have a site in mind for the out-patient center?" MO then asked as Isaiah toggled out of this view and re-focused on MO and his inquiries. MO thought of each hand he'd played at the World Series of Poker and the river card of the nine of diamonds that doubled his stack in the last round. He had

bet on an inside straight with a mere 13.5% chance of pay off, with pot-odds just over five to one.

“I do indeed,” Isaiah said and brought up an outdated satellite image of it to show MO.

It was feral and fecund and verdant in forestry and topography, but it brindled with streaks of brown from a draught five years back; back when the shot was taken. It needed updated, but Isaiah was already building an algorithm to prevent any satellites from taking new shots of those coordinates now. The map would not be updated, so the appearance of years old drought stains on the land would be incongruous with the re-populating of green by the heavy rains lately. He would need to fix that manually, but he saw that this was no problem as he let the topo-bots handle it.

“Plus, this was feral and undeveloped land for the most part, not a high priority for anyone in *Las Animas* County,” Isaiah said, as if MO was objecting, as he recalled how it was Colorado’s largest county by square mile, and least dense by population. *It was perfect*, Isaiah thought. *As the inmate had already known, for it was his parcel; the one he had signed over to his father a full year before his first murder.*

Isaiah often found himself wondering how lucky or clever the inmate was; or if Isaiah was just so built to handle whatever situation was at hand, and it thus merely looked set-up because it was so easy for him to accomplish his designs? He wondered if the inmate had helped plan for it back in time somehow; not consciously, but somehow instinctively? He never could decide on an answer to that; and he felt that asking the inmate would not help. It would be like asking a raven how it decided on the first of his 3-stage tool use. The bird had no idea; it just did things.

It would be like asking the car -not the driver- how he won the Daytona 500, Isaiah thought as he added another engine design to his suite of builds for tomorrow.

The land had been held by the father until last week, when Isaiah purchased it through corporation #4, his own, for \$190,000 which included the shipping containers, and all artifacts, and vehicles left on the property two years ago. Although Mr. MacLeod Sr. did not know about the third

container buried by his son a year before the sale, Isaiah -via FLIR imaging- did know about it.

He had left it buried out 1,409 meters beyond the center of the compound.

Lee MacLeod had offered to show the property in person, but Isaiah assured him the wire transfer would go through by noon the next day. *And title should be put in Cicadae3301 LLC's name ; all particulars to follow ;* the email had said.

It was a sale pre-approved of by the inmate before he went to prison; he had told his father to wait for an offer that rose above \$180,000 and then sell it all. Isaiah had been the only one to even inquire about it in the time since the trial. The media had briefly tried to get photos but they were lazy and it was both too far and too hard a drive to justify; they sent a local photographer who got lost and gave up as well.

The cops had searched it under warrant, but since all the belongings were in the father's name -and had been legally transfer a full twelve months before the murders- no court reversed the sale to the father by the convict. It was considered a dead issue. The State's lawyers had felt the twelve-month window was too large to overcome in court as they pondered seizures as part of the spoils of war of prosecution.

Modern prosecutions were essentially *letters-of-marque* ; the state took anything a defendant had. The inmate's bronze eye-tooth had come up as fungible asset in court; as the prosecutors -in jest they insisted- intimated he'd used such a material in *lieu* of gold to dissuade them from taking it as well.

Courtroom laughter was low but manifold and the inmate had heard it -felt it- rumble. He felt he heard echoes of what one day would be a rise. He -in his mind and in his vex- built skeletons of winged creatures underground; he buried things that would cut anyone who tried to dig him up.

Thirty-five acres is a lot to search; they saw no evidence of burial of anything other than the septic and cistern. The police hiked the land in a cursory manner and marveled at the views and the elk herd they saw down below in the valley; but sensing it was fruitless, they then stopped their reconnaissance. They never discovered that third container nor its contents.

The four-inch vent rose -like a mud wasp's bell nest- in the scrub oak, and the wind blew hard that day so no sound nor movement activated their eyes nor their mind.

It all sat buried -1,409 meters away- below ground.

They sifted through his art -removing paper from frames- and executed the search in six hours, since the house was only 640-square-feet; half of which was an empty garage. It was an austere home, no clutter, nothing much to search. One in-the-wall gun safe was discovered behind a mirror; it was empty, scratched with *Velis et Remis* in grey on the black metal. His clothes were housed in built-in closets to each side of the murphy bed. The suits, eight of them -sufficient for an 8-day week the inmate had said- were inspected for DNA, or other items, then returned to their spot.

A black playing card was found in each breast pocket, one ace of spades, and -minus one jack of spades- two pair of each suit of jacks. One king of spades, one queen, was glued several inches up each sleeve of his matte black linen 3-piece. He had soaked each sleeved card in water and whisky for weeks so that it had become so soft that the police never felt it as they molested the fabric in their search.

The monogram in the inside the dark grey lining was black and fraying at the top of the threads. It was just two words.

One cop, Jeff Messangelo, looked at the copy of the Author's book the inmate had left open on the counter; it was open to page 287, *The Affidavit*, chapter 45. Messangelo was being granted permission to act as liaison to the case and thus he didn't touch anything with his hands. Detective Ravrafters eyed him sternly when he lingered too long on any one thing. Detective *Pointes* went through each book shaking them like bags and opening them like engaged mousetraps made of paper and ink.

Sometimes photos fell out; sometimes it was ragged bookmarks with sloppy scribblings in handwriting forensics would end up linking to three names. Many pages were written on in black ink in the inmate's own hand. Pressed flowers held together at the center and frayed at the edges; bits fell in the cracks of the spine and fell out and landed on his shoes.

The lead detective had seen the red bounded copy of *The Whale*. He had perused it, skimmed it, read the underlined paragraph about the *Tattoo Land*, the part on New Zealand, and a few words underlined about *the truth needing as much bolstering as error*. He had found it strange, atavistic, opaque; but he had no idea how it linked to his case.

The inmate's confession obviated a more thoroughgoing invigilation.

But, Ravrafters thought, *while it was not all that interesting, it might be of use since it seemed to be staged for me to find*. He -at the end of their search- took it and it was entered in under State's Evidence, A1A18 on the 5th day of court for thirty-six counts of murder in Denver county, and seven counts in Broomfield county, and the three in Aurora; all subsumed under Colorado state's DA, Jessica Tortlansa; and ADA Brian Stoltinot; Judge Geier Presiding. His was the only trial on the 8th floor of the Lindsey-Flannigan building that month. Guards circled the court and directed foot traffic down and away.

The one murder in Arizona -of Mark Pike- was not linked to him at all. It remained unsolved.

Isaiah finished his speech, directives, and wrapped up his recall of all this part of the past -on the land not too far from the lab- and watched MO as he worked. A short addendum to the Chinese report came onto the cloud: In the 1870's the Japanese -who had been respectful of China's power until they saw the west subsume them in the 1860's- had bought three new battleships from the English, while the Chinese Empress robbed her own naval budget to build a New Summer Palace.

In 1894 the Chinese secret service assassinated Kim Ok-gyun -a Korean revolutionary with Japanese sympathies- and war began on the peninsula. Japan attacked -and within hours- destroyed the Chinese naval forces floating -then sinking- between Korea and Japan . The Japanese took no prisoners.

Japan made colonies of this land that they wouldn't have even coveted let alone been able to take a mere generation before.

"The [Japanese] admiration [for the Chinese] was for their success. But once they saw the west could defeat the *Ching* then the Japanese stopped

admiring the Chinese. The *Ching Dynasty* was over-confident,” *Gungwu Wang said* [see: *addendum 6a*], “and it did not occur to them that the western invasion would destroy their whole culture. And they were only -finally- woken up when they were defeated by the Japanese.”

Fifty years after China had lost the first opium war they were subjugated totally, and the trail led back to the 1790’s after Britain needed a way to pay for goods without using silver and required a new colony to replace the ones it had just lost: America , Isaiah thought as he saw the *ouroboros* asp spin in his imagination and black & red poppies unfurl under his lights.

MO was now acting out Isaiah’s plan -under 61.6% opacity- as Isaiah measured MO’s brain for that elusive combination of *chems* and function in the rational man that only appeared under such conditions. MO was -and all seemingly rational men were- inured from romance and honor: the constituent parts of normal -functional- trust; the trust normal men engaged in all the time. Normal men trusted not from lack of data, or time constraints, but because they liked to trust those above and below them, and sometimes peers to either side.

The rational brain -impervious to love or romance or desire for trust for its own sake- sometimes admitted the data -or the time- was not available to produce rational trust; and thus a new algorithm for decision making must be used. It was the one time the rational mind didn’t search for more data -nor think it had all the data necessary- as it foreclosed on a course of action. It was the only time the rational man admitted he lived in the dark. And his brain -in this moment in time- thus changed.

Isaiah watched that change in MO while his eyes looked down and away. Isaiah saw each metabolic process of *trust* under pressure; it became *belief* when all else had failed.

Isaiah held a note in his hands that he’d reproduced from one wedged in one of the book *Detective Pointes* had rifled through. It merely said:

You think every time the coin gets flipped it will come out heads. You think you’re the good guy and I’m the bad guy; and in your world that’s true.

However, in my world, you're the bad guy; you and your kind. The difference is each day I know I awake in your world; but you think each day you wake up you will always be in your world.

One day each of us will wake up and my world will be upon us both. I the King, you the... well, you with a coin that has come up tails.

The rational man, Isaiah thought, was forced to trust when decisions were made without all the data. MO was now helping Isaiah build an algorithm for that as if this was merely ancillary to his plan.

II. 2036 e.v.

“Pinch it -the very top, the terminal bud- with your fingernails. Yeah, it's easy, and it helps seal the wound,” he said as Jack Two did as instructed and the other Jacks looked upon the garden.

Blax dismissed them all except Jack Two -after that instruction- and they nodded and went to do their chores. The sun was low in the east and the sky had pink around the mountains to their north. They walked away to the west and their shadows were still grey and long and they could see the terrain still under this gauzy occlusion of the body.

“Can I just mulch this?” Jack Two asked and Blax said that he could. Blax then began to show him the internodal spacing, the difference between the symmetrical branching of the plant from seed, versus the cloned plant. Jack took notice and inquired as to why and Blax had no information beyond how he had used it to navigate the world of marijuana horticulture.

“I used it as a way to notice sexual maturity, but I have not investigated the metabolic process. Maybe you can,” he added encouragingly. *Some things, Blax noticed, he found he must invigilate and some things he just used as sign, marker, to move on.* He often chastised people for not caring as to the larger *Why* ; but he was just as capable as any man of taking the evidence of something at face value to help him navigate the world.

He often ignored the deeper reason.

He then thought of his hypocrisy. He instantly shook it off so he could continue to instruct Jack Two. *He had a job to do and ruminating on all his*

own faults right now was inefficient, he thought. There was too much information in the world to go down every rabbit-hole.

“Ok, now see the small reddish-brown hairs, two of them, emerging from this small vulva shaped pod at the node?” Blax asked.

“Yes,” Jack said, kneeling at the plant.

“Ok, that is an indication of a female plant, which is all we want. Males are to be banished for now. We may collect pollen later, but we have enough of the M4, White Rhino, White Wolf, and the 1851. So, here,” Blax said and placed his open hand under the node of another plant, as the fork in that cellular growth had two green sacks -not unlike *testis* on a mammal- and he waited for Jack to respond.

“I see, yes, male,” Jack Two said and nodded eagerly.

“Ok, so that is your task for today: sex each plant, that is, take note of males and females and then,” Blax grabbed the male and uprooted it by the lower stalk and threw it in the black bag, “exterminate with extreme prejudice.”

“Roger that,” Jack Two said and began at the lower quadrant of the acre plot they had dedicated to marijuana plants.

They -the plants- were half clones -to the west- and half from seed -to the east- and the clones would all be female as they were cloned from female plants. He need only inspect the plants from seed for sex. It was rare a female donor would produce a clone that wasn't female. It was 99.999% reliable and only under extreme conditions would the phenotype of female clone morph into a male.

They had just emerged into sexual maturity, the nodes beginning their asymmetric growth, only a few -like the one they had inspected first- were not yet differentiated. He was to uproot any plant that was male or sexually immature. *Only confirmed females would remain*, Jack repeated in his brain. They would likely lose 30% of the total seed-stock plants, as the seeds had been feminized; this had reduced the rate, the ratio, of males.

Blax had shared much of his knowledge on horticulture, as they had been growing indoors -in an 8 x 40 shipping container with its own HVAC, ballasts, drainage and compressed CO² system- for over a year. But, now -in

the Spring- they had planted an acre vivisected with 2/3rds clones and 1/3rd seeds to begin an outdoor grow.

They had shipped the product -44 pounds of Golden Goat and Kush Noire last autumn at \$2,000 a pound- to a contact Blax had known in the city. They drove the bio-diesel H1s in a three vehicle convey at 77mph from exit-32 on I25 -around Aguilar- to Denver in just under three hours. The engines were Isaiah's designs and construction. They each had 1,001 horsepower and 1,235 foot-pounds of torque. They got twenty-two miles *per* gallon.

They didn't redline until 5,500 rpms.

Jack watched the plants move in the wind as it picked up from the south. He progressed -bending at knee- from plant to plant to identify its sex and moved on or uprooted as required. He began to notice other things like some leaves were already beginning to empurple; and some thin and some fat. The phenotypes of *indicas* and *sativas* were becoming more and more clear to him over time. He saw ridges appear when humidity was up -like rolling waves on each leaf- increasing surface area to facilitate transpiration.

He had also observed the individual pine trees of the forest appeared to him now too, as he looked over that vast acreage of land.

What appears as one thing at first, breaks into manifold and differentiated parts over time when the brain can finally handle what the eye always could see, he thought with dead leaves in his hand in bunches slightly sticky and rough. They had put up a simple electrical fence around the perimeter of the garden using a battery tender and an extension cord, and that kept the deer and elk away from the plants. A trench under that was filled with small traps for racoon, foxes; *and those grey squirrels that ran like gazelle*, he thought. They had some losses, but not much, the defense system was sufficient for now. Jack Two liked those squirrels; their coats were beautiful -monolithically grey- and their tails were so long they made question marks in the air.

The plants would grow tall, likely ten to fourteen feet high before daylight waned to just half the day's twenty-four hours in the autumn. In fact, the morphological and metabolic change would likely happen around

September 1st or so, as a mere thirteen hours of light -arriving at thirty days before the equinox- was sufficient to alert the plant to enter into its flowering phase.

He would build up soil and substrate over exposed roots if he saw it; *buttage* it was called. If he didn't the sunlight would turn exposed -white- roots a sickly green. The root balls would grow down and wide, and they would be covered in beneficial bacteria and fungi and mycelia just like the native trees. They had introduced each transplanted clone with a root-shock defense drench; watering under the seed beds -down 8"- the night before they resettled the seedlings.

The worms were added seven days before planting.

The substrate, Blax had said, was as important as what one sees above ground. He had explained how the plant is inefficient at using nutrients without the help of other organism that breakdown and augment and exchange micronutrients and important things like nitrogen. He had made analogy of the enzymes -like the *p450* - in the gut that help or hinder the breakdown and bioavailability of vitamins and drugs in the human gut.

Jack Two remembered that their Lt had pointed to the trees and dug holes around the largest ones on the shelf and given them analysis of the column of soil and root removed. Jack Two continued to sex the nodes and removed the burnt and yellow leaves; he moved like an ant from V to V and leaf to leaf; he rubbed his fore and thumb to removed the inchoate trichomes that had begun to lay down an adhesive defense.

Jack remembered that Blax had then sought to reveal all the things he had predicted; pointing here and there and asking what Jack Two saw in the tangle-nest of skeins and substrate and things that moved.

The soil with organisms manifold engaged in all manner of work upon and with the roots of the trees. He showed -Jack recalled- where the root softened itself to allow penetration by the symbiotic organisms, and how the tree relaxed its own root. It was not a force move, but an open-hand policy; the tree inviting the stranger inside.

Vulnerability of the self, Blax had said, *is something each organism allows when working with other creatures for a greater good. This is not something*

just man does.

Jack had liked that analogy and thought of it often. He liked thinking of a fraternal relationship -maybe even proto-sexual fraternity- between species. Blax had told them that the great danger was when a man saw only the good or only the bad in anything. Simple men -he had warned them- could be partisans, Manichean. But the creative -the artist, the man of soul- must think of each thing from all sides.

Nature was often slandered by the frightened, and romanticized by the *naïve* , but it was just like a man: capable of great heroism and great perfidy, being helpful and getting in the way. *Nature*, their Lt had said to them more than once, *is trying to kill us all, and yet it also provides all that we need in order to survive* .

Blax had been quiet often after such things were said, and Jack Two knew he was thinking of love lost, of other beings that he had held close to his heart and been wounded by their flapping of sharp bronze-wings as they lifted off from -and abandoned- his hand.

Blax more often thought of the overturned hand -the other hand- that had dropped those that would be wounded by him. He knew why now, *but did that excuse -that awareness- heal those he had harmed?* he asked himself with abrading tones. People called mistakes learning opportunities, but they forgot their other people on the end of those so-called mistakes.

Jack heard the Lt dismiss his failure at love as *his own fault* , never wanting to blame others, but Jack didn't buy it. *It wasn't that Blax was incapable of fucking things up, no*, Jack thought, what he meant was: he didn't believe that Blax actually thought he was the only party to blame.

Blax said that to save face, Jack thought, *to never be the victim; but he was wounded and felt it difficult to share blame with people he truly felt were predatory* . Jack agreed that some of them -just by law-of-averages- must have been no good. But he also knew he was biased in favor of Blax.

Who wants to believe one's parents are capable of such jealousy and stupidity and malice? It makes little biological sense, from an evolutionary perspective to prioritize one's self over one's son. If that was logical to do, the whole species might not make it out of the much beyond one generation

, Jack thought. *But man was not rational, and Blax brought out the worst in men*, Jack snorted in a quick laugh.

He was hated by almost everyone, that was just a fact.

But, Jack returned his focus, the nuance was that Lee and Pam were not loving people, they were empty of heart . Second, Blax had had a vasectomy, and so they could get no grandchildren from him, this must have changed -somehow- their calculus , Jack thought. But, that might be too sophisticated and second or third order for them, they might just feel the gauzy hatred and competitiveness and the need for revenge . But, like the man vexed who kicks his hated roommate's dog when he isn't around -for he cannot directly challenge him- Blax's parents just didn't have the stomach for direct combat with their son.

The sun sent a ray over the *Hat Pine* -the one just to the north of the jeep trail- and Jack let go of such errant thoughts of thing unsolvable. The sun rose directly between the containers on the winter solstice and had migrated north each day since then. It was now May 4th . That shard of light was white; and it held heat -and all bands of the rainbow- in the morning cold. It landed on his chest and arm as he stood to survey the plot. He bent all the way down to the soil and it was grey and cool again and the light went over his head.

He noticed stripes of purple and red on the stalks of the *sativa* plants; he had asked Blax what it meant.

"Likely low nitrogen," Blax said. "Use the leaf colors as a secondary point of analysis, often a diagnosis requires two -or more- phenomena together to assess it; often single symptoms can denote many things."

"The leaves are like a lime green," Jacked added. He was being taught more than how to diagnosis low-nitrogen; but how to organize one's epistemology. He was being taught not *what* , but *how* , to think.

"Yeah, then let's add some *Indonesia* guano to that one; in a drench. Make up enough for as many plants as you see, one gallon *per* each," Blax stood at the edge of the garden and tried to let Jack muddle his way through; he on the periphery for help, but not holding his hand.

Jack was sweet -all lovey-dovey- and it made Blax smile to think of him that way. He'd probably end up with a little black-haired wife and a dozen kids and doing face painting and 3-legged sack races in three years' time. He shook his head after briefly enjoying the future he had constructed like a little diorama in his imagination. He was still blown away by how each Jack was 99% similar but their small differences were enough to reveal deep differentiation over time and space. They were like diverging lines on a graph; parallel for now, but one could see the gaps.

Each of them was coming into their own more and more, and their interests made them up; as much as they shaped whatever it was they took hold of.

He then watched Jack Four walk across his line-of-sight and take the household garbage -the non-biomass- to the burn barrel and soak it in gasoline.

The man moved with his shoulders sometimes, like those were the gears that actuated the hips and ass and legs. He was a machine, like them all -at *the Rotam et Sacoma* - and to Blax he seemed beautiful even with a hand full of garbage and waste. He watched him as discreet parts then as one uniform beast. *Everything came apart and went back together again*, Blax thought with a slight nervousness.

Jack Two thought of the harvest, and how far away it seemed, and his mind raced with all manner of things to be done between now and then. Each stage of the plant's growth required specific protocols of nutrients, grooming, pest control, FIMing, and watching out for disease and malady. Any problem had manifold causes and symptom from rotten root terminal & tendril to the burn on the tip of a leaf.

The leaves were beginning to show phototropic movement toward the light as the sun rose in the sky. Jack knew that was a sign of health, the leaf clusters with their arms raised to the sun god. Down trodden leaves during the day was often a sign of stress.

But the Lt had said that likely the wind and cool summers here at elevation would reduce the heat associated with the canopy in an indoor grow, Jack recalled. The heat -even with ventilated lights- collected right below the bulb and above the tops of the plants. Heat stress was a killer, and it vitiated plant growth and production. It could cause seeding, parthenogenesis, and

mutated and malformed flowers that would end up having no density -no weight- or sugar at all. *The buds would grow away from themselves, as if shedding all layers of self, just to get cool. The equivalent not of removing a jacket, but of pulling the muscles away from the bone to air out the inside of the corpus itself* , Jack thought.

Jack had seen it with *Kush Noire* , one of his favorite cultivars, and how heat ruined its coloring, and attenuated its density & manichean sugar against the dark flowering that normally manifested in the cool zones of the canopy. *Heat at the canopy was a killer*, Jack thought as he organized his ideas, *these cultivars were mountain crops; but cold roots would stop all metabolic activity too; and a wet footed plant would just refuse to drink.*

They ran large heat mats under the substrate indoors, and Blax said the ambient substrate -or soil *temp* - should be two degrees warmer than the air above. That had solved all their root issues; and from then on the whole operation had thrived. *Warm soil* , Jack thought as the sun began to lay on the dirt and the stones Blax had placed in -mixed in- the dirt began to absorb the early morning heat.

They had built a pelagic layer of gravel of stones -just below the surface- that absorbed -at day- and released -at night- the sun's heat; they had built a thermal sink and drain. Jack still liked to carry the unused stones in his pocket and touch them when his hands were not occupied.

His M4 rested against his chair at the edge of the garden; he spied it and saw the malamutes run by in a pair.

He took out his laser thermometer and laid a red dot on the stone that was the size of his hand that lay just left of his feet and just inches from a burgeoning plant. The stone was at 66-degrees now, and the overnight low was 49; this stone, this thermal basin, must have kept -and would in hours keep- the soil around it warmish all night. He'd measure it again at 1500hrs to see its temperature then. *Thermal gain*, Blax had called it and explained that the rocks absorb heat during the day and then release it *via* diffusion at night as the soil cooled and took it; he had explained that this kept the roots warm overnight. He explained that things did more than what they appeared to do at first blush; things had dual-purposes.

Those obvious and those one layer down, he had said , Jack now recalled.

Everyone in Graves or Bordeaux spoke of the way the rocks -the gravel-aerated the soil, led to drainage, but they rarely spoke of thermal gain and slow release at night to keep the roots warm, Blax had said as Jack had dug in the dirt one day.

Blax spoke above the work and gave homilies on things the Jacks' hands did.

Jack Two loved this -he truly did- and he knelt down and sunk his fingers in the loose dirt around a Golden Goat plant that was already 24" high. He felt the temperature of the soil feel cool on his 98-degree hands and thought of how to the cold roots it would feel warm. He rocked a little to work his hands in the dirt and he saw Blax walk away. He had four or five hours of work just culling males and slow-growers and he wondered what was for lunch today. Jack Three was cooking, and had been all week, so he wondered what new ideas he had in his head.

Yesterday's lunch had been arugula and shrimp gumbo and a brown rice *etouffe* . Jack Three was on this Cajun kick ever since they got back from the port city and trucked the *Marbles* to a parking lot in *Raton* , New Mexico.

New Orleans was -Jack Two admitted- a great city, much cooler -much funkier- much more alive than most cities in the states. It had character, you could tell where you were; unlike when in Dallas or Denver or Dayton. The French influence, the *creole* , the Caribbean blacks, and the Indian all made it seem a *mélange* of pre-rational man. *The Wildman of the Indians, the Big Chief walks, the unsaid* , Jack thought, *the ineffable black magjick of New Orleans*. He looked around and each Jack and Blax were all gone; *even the birds were in flight away from here or sheltered*, he thought.

Jack turned toward the ground and smoothed the dirt around each stalk and then gathered up the dead leaves; he knew this was the daily *tao* of love; to tend, to cull, to carry and be carried away.

III. 2020 e.v.

"Why?" MO asked.

“Well, I was broken,” the inmate said. He pulled his hands together to make it seem like it was his choice to have them so close together.

“Broke or broken?” Isaiah injected. He tightened the bolts on the rocker arms and put the socket on the intake manifold so that he could walk over - with empty hands- to the chair in which the inmate sat.

“A little of both,” the inmate laughed in the answer. He then reformulated it. “No, I had money and stuff I could sell for enough money to live for years. I only used \$24,000 a year back then. It costs more to house me here,” he said, meaning the prison. “You know that?”

“Yes, \$36,780 annually; and that’s average. You cost more, due to transport and security, and the fall out for your behavior,” MO said without care or feelings or how that might sound.

“Yeah,” the inmate smirked as he thought of the bodies and carnage and vexation of the staff and the State at his -as MO put it- *behavior* .

“So, at any rate, I was broken. The body, the corpus, was just too fucked up to return to steady work. And look, I worked the saw mill, I worked for Bob and Mike both, I worked. But, it took me three days to recover from each one day of work; and I’m not joking, this body looks like it’s thirty years old, but inside, well you’ve seen the X-rays,” he trailed off. They had done more than X-ray him, they had a full diagnostic on the man.

He looked -on the outside- worse than he thought.

“Yes, and the MRIs and the soft tissue scans, all of it. You are severely damaged in C5 and C6, in T8 and T9; starburst bone spur from same. Massive nerve impingement, radial nerve damage to right arm and right hip and knee. Cartilage damage to left knee. Broken right hand at metacarpals and knuckles and left hand at the wrist. Massive arthritic damage to knuckles on both hands, calcium deposits on knuckles, *ibid* ; scarring and foreign matter occlusion in same knuckles. Broken toe on right foot, aged by over twenty years; broken metatarsals on left foot under one year of age.

“Bullet entry would in left side of knee, metal fragments embedded, bone spur on tibia due to GSW. Three broken ribs, healed over ten, eight and three year period; torn cartilage at sternum and right scapula.

“Stab wound at right flank; penultimate rib. Jaw dislocation and tendon damage, skull fracture -eight years old- evidence of eighteen concussions, early signs of CTE, although we’ve intervened on that one and it’s in abatement. Broken thumb; left hand, thirty-years old; fractured metacarpal right hand in areas 2; 7; 9. Broken teeth at R-cuspid 6, 09, 07, 08, 32, 33, 26, 25 and L4 & L5 removals.

“Broken nose. Scar tissue on face at chin, at left eye, 13cm down check and jaw; also scar -33cm in length- along left flank, at right hip, 2cm scar on each testis from vasectomy surgery in 2002; numbness in left hand, burning in both feet; and you have intermittent muscle spasms in back on average every eleven days,” MO read aloud the truncated report.

“Yeah, and it hurts,” the inmate said with a wink.

“What hurts?” MO asked not getting the joke.

“All of it. All the time,” the inmate said.

“Do they give you meds in the infirmary at the ADX?” MO asked.

“I’m surprised you have to ask; don’t you have access to all my records?” the inmate asked.

“I ask because I want to hear it from you. I do not feel that the answer -or the truth- of some objective fact is the only way to have what I need. I need *your* answer in addition to *the* answer,” MO had leaned heavily on the word, *the*.

“I see, that’s an interesting thing. That’s a very human thing. We ask questions we already know the answer to as well. Lawyers do it; journalists, and criminals,” the inmate said.

“So, criminals for short,” Isaiah jumped in with that quip collapsing the three into one.

“Not all *lawyers* are frauds Isaiah,” the inmate said as they all smiled at the implication for journalists.

Isaiah had also diagnosed him with Central Sensitization, a CNS malady that arose from spinal cord injuries left untreated for at least six years. The inmate had suffered his first spinal injury at age nine; and thus, now at forty-six, the injury -along with four other reinjuries of that same area- had

been left untreated for thirty-five years. His pain response system had reset six times -that Isaiah could determine- making his body recalibrate pain each time. This effectively made the world more and more painful each time it reset. The pain he was suffering was made baseline, nominal, zeroed out effectively.

And this made things that were not painful before the reset -a contusion, an abrasion, a movement, a touch- painful now. It also made all stimuli from before the rest -sunlight, audio impulse, garish color and jagged language- all more and more painful to him over time.

He seemed to just be getting cranky, intolerant, a curmudgeon, but it was a real physiological phenomenon that was well document with over fifty medical papers published since 1999. He was in pain from slight things, things that would never have hurt him before the injuries had taken hold for such long durations that the body thought it needed to re-calibrate both he and his response to the abrading world.

Isaiah knew this was why the consistent narcotic dosage was less effective over time, not because of tolerance to the drug -as all doctors had insisted as they dismissed the patient's plea for more analgesics- but because the pain had actually increased in the inmate, the patient, the man. His body had no idea that its response was counterproductive, it thought it was helping the organism that was too inured to pain, too callous, too willing to injure himself and thus needed a more heightened pain response to the world.

The body thought it was making it impossible for the organism to go on harming himself. The patient, the man, was to respond to this increase in pain -this intolerable pain- by removing himself from as many sources of pain as he could. This was the logic of the reset of the body to chronic pain. He stayed indoors to avoid bright lights, he limited all sounds that chafed him -including the most annoying sounds, that of people- and he moved to the wilderness so as to avoid even the common touch -once pleasurable- of a woman or girl.

Isaiah saw an interesting engram appear. He saw it link to another; and he saw it activate genes not unlike the *toxoplasmosis* did. It changed the way bio-chemistry functioned, preventing the necessary voltage for certain neurons to fire, increasing conductance to ensure firing other times. And

right as Isaiah watched the memory build -as he allowed it to replay- he saw each word of Wulf's link to a change in calcium ions, quorum sensing of conducting material, and the firing of neurons in the inmate's brain: You gotta ask why even be alive! Why! Honesty isn't a fuckin' means; it's an end. An end to the tragedy of life; an end to cheapness of it; an end to the loneliness of this existence. Without honesty you're already dead. And yet nobody believes this. They live a lie thinking they are avoiding death. They kill themselves with lies thinking it's how to survive.

How many truly honest men are there? A dozen? Less? What would happen to the truly honest man? Could then that man restart the world? Could I? Could you? Why not -Lyndon- why not find out? Why don't you find out and be one of that dozen?

Isaiah took note of the suit the inmate had filed on 8th amendment grounds; but moved on. It was one bit of data in his observable universe; one drop among the incessant waves.

He saw the memory of Wulf's comments break apart and fade. The *chems* though had stayed and now the inmate's brain was activating in the left hemisphere and a speech was coming on.

"The bad news is that we're all responsible for our own lives; even the shit others do to us. The good news is that we each have ultimate authority over our life too. Extreme ownership means absolute authority. Hell, yeah," inmate 16180339 said as the bronze eye-tooth sat back in the dark aperture of his asymmetric grin.

He had retreated, but the pain continued to increase. Isaiah saw the body kept recalibrating and returning him to this unavoidable mean.

39. Not One Man in Five Cycles

Once norms get entrenched, we observe them for their own sake. If you are in an honor culture, you believe that backing down from a challenge is cowardly, that standing up for yourself is simply the right thing to do. If you back down, you'll feel greater shame than someone from a non-honor culture Why Honor Matters [Sommers, Tamler]

There seems no doubt that Greek architects and sculptors incorporated [the golden] ratio in their artifacts. *Phidias*, a famous Greek sculptor, made use of it. The proportions of the Parthenon illustrate the point. Indeed, it was after Phidias that *phi* was named

The Mars Mystery [Hancock, Graham]

You cannot hide the soul. Through all his unearthly tattooings, I thought I saw the traces of a simple honest heart; and in his large, deep eyes, fiery black and bold, there seems tokens of a spirit that would dare a thousand devils The Whale [The Author]

I. 2036 e.v.

He kicked at the logs in the fire, the monolith of fire box and hearth was black at front from soot, and warm all around the grey aperture. Sparks like quorum of fireflies rose up as he jammed his black boot into it again.

He set his whisky on the anvil and pulled his gloves from his back pocket - held there just in case work, like war, broke out- and he snugged them onto the hands. He wrangled the dried *Pinion* logs around until air could get in between them and facilitate the wanted burn.

“The thing that Melville truly, well, the thing that distressed him the most about the reading public was that they were comprised of two thirds of the three possible types; the skimmer of pages; and those that extracted an obvious, pat, meaning. The third -and last, the smallest sect- were those that extracted a hidden meaning,” he said as he reclaimed the scotch in a square

glass from the 75-pound anvil and pressed the 20-pound sledge tight to it the way women push plates back into cupboards or align forks in a drawer.

The Jacks sat; they were lit up on one side by the augmenting fire and they drank from his speech and from their glasses. Jack Four tried to take quiet breaths and thought that when Blax spoke of other men he revealed more about his own nature than when he said this or that of himself.

This radical honesty thing was horseshit, Jack Four thought as he stared at the hearth.

“The Author lamented the first two types and said as much; he admitted that one third of men just skimmed the pages for the story, to read a whale tale. The second type, comprising a full third of the reading public, would read more slowly and carefully but they would only take the first layer of meaning, the obvious layer and not think any further down, not *a layer lower down*, as Ahab enjoined his first mate to do,” Blax said as he eyed the fire looking to see if the new architecture of the logs had the look of a fire willing now to burn for a while.

“His true audience he felt was that reader who read not merely more slowly, not just extracting the first obvious metaphor, but began to suspect there was a deeper, more hidden meaning, behind the *pasteboard mask* of the Author’s words and world.

“But when a book sells merely two-thousand copies of only three-thousand printed in 1851 -most of the unsold copies burned in a warehouse fire- you can bet that if one used the Author’s own calculus then maybe six-hundred people got the book, got its meaning -its true meaning- at all. I personally bet it was worse than that,” he said as the Jacks drank slowly and knocked dirt from their boots and scratched at their emerging beards.

“A hundred men if he was lucky,” Blax added as they nodded and he -after taking enough data from the look of the fire- finally felt he could remove his black gloves and return them to his back pocket.

“Not one man in five cycles , the Author wrote, can expect any recognition from his fellows; if he is wise ,” Blax quoted. “Now, that means two things, as he always seems to do, like a painter who painted on glass so that there was an image to discern on both sides at once.

“It means if a man is wise, he shouldn’t expect recognition, not once in a hundred years. And -it also meant- the man who is wise, he’s the one that cannot receive recognition by dint of his being too deep and trenchant for the great mass of men to even comprehend, much less appreciate. Plenty of people finally understand him *now* ; and they hate him for it. Melville -once people figure this out- was saying truly horrible things.

“He was saying there is no hope. Period. He was saying there was no hope for the truly wise man. Not for himself, nor *Solomon* , nor for his culture or the world itself. And his democracy was not the kind you’d agree with; he felt man was equal to God; and as such was equal to the devil.

“The secret motto of the book is *Ego non baptiso te in nomine patris, sed in nomine diaboli!*” Blax quoted in *Latin* and spit saliva and whisky into the fire to make it return a ballistic of bark and comet tail of fire. They all - mostly- grinned at the little trick.

He stared and the pine-fire and spoke more.

“The Author was saying they -man and his blackness; America and the outlaw; God and Satan- needed each other and neither one of them was willing to meet half way anymore. He was saying that in ancient times, *Solomon* had a kingdom, *that culture* was what wise men built. But now, the kingdom has grown so large that it can exile the wise man and not even know he has left; not know until it all falls apart. God reigned in Heaven for how long before the archangels fell to earth? How long must a man live before his blackness, *ten times black*, covers more than just his tenebrous and rightful half? When can we say that it -that either side- begins to encroach?

“The author of *The Whale* , was not merely quarrelling with God; he was assaulting him, hurling the harpoon from a panting -just barely standing- position. He knew that this was madness; but he insisted that there was a madness in woe and a woe in wisdom, and that the thing in all men who seek dignity and justice, a desire built into man by God -but only articulated by Satan- well, that thing in him -whatever it is- must attempt to kill -to vanquish- all tyranny -all ignobility- over him.

“And death was such tyranny; God’s tyranny, right? God had condemned us to death. And man’s tyranny was hardly any less severe. Man forced not

death on his fellow man -although they would if necessary- but the fetters, the coercion, the forced march of conformity was what the Author saw as he faced west.

"I cannot write what I truly mean , Melville wrote to Hawthorn in 1852. What I feel most moved to write, that is banned. It will not pay. Yet altogether, write the other way I cannot. Though I write the Gospels in this century I should die in the gutter. Try to get a living by the truth – and go to the soup societies. I hold it a verity, that not even Shakespeare was a frank man to the uttermost. And indeed, who in this intolerant universe is, or can be?" the Author wrote to Hawthorn with self-critique, but balmed by the notion that he was no better nor worse than the great mass of men.

"He was describing an intractable tyranny inside each man, each society, each god.

"But all things are in thirds with Melville and the world. And the lower layer still, is man himself. Yes, God is locked like a yin and yang, a dark spot in *Huginn* and a white eye in *Muninn* over and above the *snow white hill in the sky* ; and yes, there is a glint in Satan's eye. Culture too has its malevolence spread as night falls, but the sun spot of dawn will forever revolve up and over man's highest work of society. Last is man, the smallest instantiation. A high brow, a crucifixion of a face, but," he began to quote the Author at length: While men may seem detestable as joint-stock companies and nations; knaves, fools and murderers there may be, men may have mean and meager faces, man in the ideal is so noble and so sparkling; such a grand and glowing creature that over any ignominious blemish in him, all his fellows should rush to throw their costliest robes.

"I cannot help but demand that any man who reads these words remember that there are three levels at least that must be heeded in any work of nature, culture or man himself. The wise man must look higher and lower than his natural gaze.

"And the author of all things, from God to man, cannot always know just what it is he creates. He focuses on one size or side of thing, the other levels -as above so below- manifest just out of his reach. The artist can carve but one sculpture -with his hands upon the work- but the audience -standing back- will see at least three images from above and below and their own

eye level. God creates but one Holy Sepulcher, but man will see religions in threes -the one that denies the Christ, that be the Jew, then the true believer, your Christian, and then the youngest of the three who nods to an able Jesus but moves on with Mohammad into some static future tense.

“This is God’s audience, a bunch of squabbling critics who can’t decide on which of the three levels is true!” Blax was ranting a bit now -not merely in content, which he always did, but in tone- and the Jacks were absorbing as much as they could. Their PGCs helped with the references and word definitions and context, but it was still more poetry than prose to them and this made them feel they missed more of the fish than they caught of the sea.

“Who but the artist or God himself has right to collapse the wave into just one possibility? No, the audience -the penitent- must submit to bow and then raise an eye and see all things at least in threes before they can claim to have seen any one thing at all,” he sat down on the large log, twenty inches in diameter that Jack One sat on one end of, and Blax put his sooty hand on Jack’s shoulder in that way apes paw those they care for and want to lay hands on to comfort both the subaltern and themselves.

It was a simple -unlettered- sign that each can somehow connect in this fractured life.

II. 2039 e.v.

“Yeah but the ratio still obtains, whether there are ten billion or a hundred people on the planet, right?” Chen asked.

“I guess, I mean I don’t know if there is a threshold or not, but I get your point,” he said.

“Good, because I’m right, obviously,” Chen said with his way of joking and not joking too. Chen looked around.

Lyndon laughed and asked if he wanted something to drink.

“It’s late, and I don’t want to be up pissing all night,” Chen said and thus declined the beverage offer.

“How you sleep at night is beyond me,” Lyndon said with the double *entendre* just hanging there. Of course, he was saying -explicitly- that he

preferred to sleep during the day and arise at night, but the other more colloquial meaning of that phrase was not embedded without intent.

“Yeah,” Chen said, heading toward the couch to sit down. He preferred to ignore the barb. The room’s air seemed desiccated and charged. His movements became rounded to avoid the sparking of angular moves.

“I was thinking, if the square root of ten billion -which is what, a hundred-thousand?” Lyndon asked as he too made certain his words ended in O’s and zeros while beginning with I’s and ones. He sought out liquids and lipids and eschewed things concrete and ignored his own bone. The genealogy of the *stele* was covered in shadow, its information -its words, its letters- moved away from the eyes; its spaces between each C, A, T and G retreated from the mind.

“Yeah, sure,” Chen agreed. His body heated up .4 degrees; his heart added one beat.

“Ok, so that means a hundred-thousand people are doing half the work, and 9.999 billion are doing the other half. But if we have just one million people, that means a thousand are doing half and nine-hundred ninety-thousand are doing the other half, and if we have just a thousand people then a hundred doing half and nine-hundred do the other half, and so,” Lyndon trailed off.

“So,” Chen said. He heard Wulf in the head speak of the Cosmic Warrior; Chen couldn’t stop the repeating of the speech from twenty, forty -what seemed a billion- years ago: *...he conducts his whole life as magnificent ritual composed of infinite acts and reactions, meditations, and contemplations, inner and outer dialogues, and each of the meticulously managed micro-rituals within the greater macro-ritual that is life itself. And to a true warrior victory is the only acceptable conclusion .*

“So, my point is that in real numbers, in real life, I’d rather have to feed and clothe and drive around nine-hundred mediocre fucks than 9.999 billion. The actual numbers matter, in real terms, not as a ratio or whatever, but actual integers. Numbers, people,” Lyndon said as he stared at the monolith.

“Yeah, that is fine, but you never get more efficient, it’s always the top ten percent or whatever that do most the work,” Chen said with a yawn. His

inner voice -like a radio- transmitted sound from Wulf into the air one more time, the signals traveled in shockwaves from the source leaving it nearly deaf of its own utterance.

“No, I get it, but I’m just talking about a society that is smaller, has stars, sure, but still you have -in real numbers- less dross, way less. And in a tribe of a hundred, you have ten stars and ninety people that are still way necessary. Those ninety do half the work, that half is important,” he was insisting on this now. His ears were like fields on the edge of the forest, the trees of *cilia* laying down from the wind of Wulf’s incantations enjoining neither peace nor war.

“Yeah, but like the chickens, you know that one?” Chen countered. The shaman whispered to Wulf. Wulf nodded and held his old breath.

“The chickens, no,” Lyndon said. The sounds entered the head slower than light, the light waves broke through, made way where sound waves would make hay.

“So, they noticed that certain alpha chickens laid all the eggs, like the same Pareto distribution but with a certain genetic badass chicken,” Chen said as he forgot all the future he’d once knew, and the past became fluid and open to interpretation too.

“Ok,” Lyndon said as the third burst of electricity -it felt like electricity on his neurons that conducted one wave of three- made him stand erect and straighten the elbows and lock the knees. He tried to look cavalier but this one was now heating up his brain and the thoughts too now were hot and blending, melting, fusing. He had no disparate words, no, discreet thoughts, nothing he could claim as his own. He just felt a general kind of anxiety and desire to climb up as if the ground itself were source of the shock.

He felt it come from the concrete ceiling and walls, he felt something enveloping the compound, something large in the ground. He worried for all but *Arthur* and the water in which he swam.

“Well, they then just bred only alpha chickens and built a hen house of the best of the best,” Chen said as he looked away and focused briefly on his own knees and thighs and hands. The transmission in his head had stopped, he felt himself quiet inside the radio-room of his own mind. He saw himself

move from the open window of what seemed the Sierra Maestra, he heard static and turned the volume down. He refused to breathe.

“The Dream Team, *Pollo* edition,” Lyndon said, but he had no idea why he said that; he didn’t know what he was replying to exactly. He felt hot. He felt cool. He felt heavy and low; he felt suspended in the effluvium of some different kind of water.

“Yeah,” Chen laughed without hearing his own guffaw, “so, they should have all laid the most eggs and produce the same amount of eggs with just those hundred alphas as with a thousand normally distributed chickens.”

“But I am guessing not,” Lyndon said. The conversation continued without him, he looked about the walls for rungs, doors that went up, but the athenaeum was absent that. It was enclosed and he felt he could only go up, not make a lateral move to find stairs -or egress- of any kind. He squatted, thinking -feeling, or maybe reacting- this might solve this need to climb up. His impulses were no longer to be debated.

“No, they all fought all the time, it was a *melee* and no eggs got laid at all,” Chen said. His body was inert; his heart beat at fifty-five beats *per* minute. His lungs took it all in. Category-5 whirlwinds of atoms hung over head.

“Jesus,” Lyndon said as he shook his head; but the eyes found no cause to follow the shake. He stared straight at the monolith and the names. But they were not names. They were merely symbols, scratches at best, like a bear had attacked it for weeks, months, scoring it until he too could climb up and out and away.

He saw bear skull -four, five of them in the portico- in the hallway, by the door that rattled from the wind.

“So, the mediocre chickens acted as a buffer between alphas, and they figured out that just making a society -a chicken coop- of just the top 1% -multiplied artificially- gave you an environment too competitive and hostile to get anything accomplished. Bet you didn’t think of that did *ya?*” Chen asked as he arched his back and looked briefly at his friend who was squatting on the floor with his palms pressed to the smooth concrete floor and staring at the block of rusted and mottled *crete*.

The narration of the man -the recording- of the *stele* began to read from the script as Lyndon moved inside the ring of the room: *And on January 7th , a boy was born. The Russian Orthodox Church opens its mass at midnight on this day of the lord and the black cowled monks of the old Christ refuse to speak to foreigners or the apostate.*

On the next day the mother broke and the child was thus abandoned.

The islands broke in half 1.6 billion years before. The winds blew all but the rock.

“No, I did not,” Lyndon agreed with Chen and thus took his medicine inside a haughty condescending look from his friend; observable from across the room. He took the insult like it was nothing; for once it felt like nothing to be insulted. The five monoliths, the pillars rose in front like Roman columns and the plants seemed like her hair, like her spiraled eyes, like her ideas. He avoided the center of the horseshoe, but the voice went on anyway. He need not enter filly. He let the greens and whites spring and twist out beyond his hand.

“Who’s the smart one now?” Chen asked; a small ironic barb, a testing. A joke, as Oscar Wilde said, *was an epitaph to a feeling in a man.*

“You are,” Lyndon said and bowed the head. He monomaniacally eyed the *stele* along the northern wall. The darkness and fire light made the carvings deep and hid many places that in day would be revealed. He had no thought of the morrow, no idea what day or night was. He felt nothing beyond the now. The athenaeum’s voice droned on: The plates below the oceans moved like a dancer to the partner not the music at all. The church held fast as the flaxen rope snapped and the cleat shined from the wear. By 1881 the patriarch was ten years from not death but ascension. A customs house in Manhattan held his body; a records house on Imlay street held his mind.

The Author traveled to see Hawthorne and the isle’s sea washed the sand away. His words would wash over a man in 161 years; a million men in 181 years. A girl would read it to her child in the womb by 2020 e.v.

And that girl would become queen bee of the forest; and she’d tell the foragers and the soldiers that she dreamt for the captain, “Oh, my

captain,” she’s said as she told them that she had shown him the way in the dark.

The she produced a steel chain and a brass casing and a bronze oath. She hid the tooth from the bees.

“I win; make the check out to,” Chen said -ignoring the recording as he had heard it many times- as he reclined more in the couch. He breathed and felt better. His roil was absorbed by the land outside the concrete walls and ceiling.

“Ok, but what about just finding some happy median, where there is less dross, but not all one percenters; some balance between chaos of incessant pitch battle between alphas-only coop and ten billion dumbasses clogging up my roads?” Lyndon asked with no passion, no care for the answer. His palms felt cool on the ground, and he had no idea what ground was, or what hands were, only the sense of cool. His thoughts flittered in elliptical rings; his ideas heavy with pollen; his desires slick with raw honey and candle wax hinting at future flames.

“Yeah, but what’s the optimal number, and who gets to decide?” Chen asked as he felt some tingling in his fingers now too and flexed the hands and then laid them upon his chest. He saw raven feathers on the walls and red-hawk tails in camouflaged coyote heads and the scoring of brow upon the white skulls of bears and corvids and larger cat.

“A hundred; and me, I decide. Maybe you ought to make sure your CV is up-to-date,” Lyndon said not understanding anything of what was said; it all sounded guttural and of only phonemes; maybe from languages foreign to him and in shrieks.

“Fuck you,” Chen laughed and shook his head on the couch, static electricity building from this, “man, you are harsh.”

“You have no idea,” Lyndon said even as he had no idea what he meant. His chest felt hot and like a coal was dropped in it, and his body told him again to climb up. His arms as ivy, each hair a wasp on tethered vector; each lash a winged-scorpion; his eyes their flights. He felt a family of *apidae* listening to the bells of flowers ring from each joint; he felt opium dissolve on the tongue.

“Oh, I think I have some idea, pulling guys out of their cars on the street,” Chen liked to bring that up; it was a way to remind Lyndon of his capacity - his history- of idiopathic violence. And it was something Chen said - implicitly, subconsciously- as warning to Lyndon to calm down; to not be mere animal. It was said to remind him of the social contract between modern men.

The single *apis nearctica* fossil from northeastern Nevada was stored in a glass case in the wall. It was 14.1 million years old. It was there despite each man’s forgetfulness.

“Colorado Boulevard; yeah, nobody honks at me; fuck that guy and his Vietnamese girlfriend,” he said reminiscing in his head of the guy -in his forties or fifties- that Lyndon had grabbed by the throat one day in 2008. He had yanked him from the car and beat him four or five times in the ribs and back as his little Asian girl screamed and threw a fit. He thought, then and now, that the road was the zone most in need of cleaning up; the *loci* of where people behaved the worst.

It was instinct; but he could explain why if ever asked.

He’d rammed people with his trucks -three separate times- for various infractions. He had gotten out of his car to fight more than once. One time the guy had actually sat in the car and not moved at all; he had been small - mustachioed like a cop- and just stared straight ahead. He was in a Jeep, and it was Wadsworth Boulevard -it was late afternoon in spring- and he had been riding Lyndon’s ass even though Lyndon had been going as fast as traffic would allow; as that road was always jammed with civilians.

Lyndon liked to drive fast, and appreciated the guy’s desire, but it was heavy traffic with nowhere for him to go to improve either of their positions, so it was futile and thus rude -as Lyndon was not slowing anyone down with dillydallying or fucking around at all- and so -at the next stop- Lyndon got out of his truck and went to the man’s window to tell him to knock it off.

The guy was oddly calm; most people got scared.

But not that guy; he had either been a cop or a psychopath, Lyndon thought, *and likely both.* He had -in the end- told the guy to *fuck off* and

walked away as the guy actually said, “yeah that’s what I thought,” as if to insult Lyndon for walking away. It was a salient moment for Lyndon; he had had his .45 on his hip and was twice the guy’s size, but he had a bad feeling; like that guy knew something Lyndon didn’t.

And with that bad feeling -that hesitation- Lyndon merely -with a slight pause two thirds of the way back- continued his vector to his car.

That moment always stuck with him, and he felt like it was likely the wisest -and still the most cowardly- decision he could have made. It stuck in his craw all these years -lifetimes- later. The guy was right, Lyndon had been all bluster, all talk, and not prepared to go the full measure. Lyndon had been used to venting and people backing down, and yet this guy just looked straight ahead and then insulted him as a coward for not doing anything as he walked away. It was unusual, and instructive and -at twenty-eight- it had been a flag planted in the ground. And that’s why five years later he had pulled the guy from his car and beat him; he refused to be that other guy, that guy from before who was all talk.

He’d rather be dead, in jail, sued, than a coward ever again. But he had been a coward over and over and no matter how many times he wasn’t, there were at least three times as many where he was.

He had it within him like a headache that never healed. And as he thought all this somehow lucidly, and in perfect detail, for the thousand and first time, he forgot it all at once -in a wave collapse- and he’d never remember it -or any of his chagrins- again.

His brain lit up like a corposant, his visual field turned blue and white, and looked like the baked mud of some ice planet in drought due not to absence of water but lack of heat. He saw his athenaeum turn to a new planet he’d live upon and not be allowed to carry any baggage from earth.

He had way too many times allowed way too many people to push him around, and yet all anyone ever saw were the times he put his foot down. But it was likely no more than -well, he thought, *the square root of all moments*.

That was like 38 minutes a day of taking no shit and 1,400 minutes a day of eating it, he calculated.

Jesus, that means in years, that's like six-and-a-half years of being a badass and thirty-five years of being a pussy, he then figured. He -due to this ice desert of blue and craquelure in his visual field, with no thoughts of anything that his brain had calculated at all- sighed aloud with a mix of high CO² exhale and what would be his brain's idea of angst.

"What?" Chen said. His friend's tenor had changed, he spoke and breathed and was still in ways that seemed to make his own fingers tingle in sympathetic response. Chen felt himself move as if equidistant in some wave; buoyed and held *in situ* with his friend in sight but not reach.

"Oh, I just calculated -using the pareto distribution- how often I fight back and how often I eat shit and man it's not pretty," Lyndon said using each word to chip away at the frozen arid cracks in the air and walls and floor in front of him. He spoke as if the hot breath would melt the inner cell he saw he was proton to.

"Dude, all of life is eating shit," Chen said as he turned his head back straight and up at the ceiling. He felt an electron that did not move, but rather switched from six to noon.

"Well, I hate it, and I've worked really hard to refuse as many meals of shit as possible. And if I'm honest, I've been hardly any more impressive in that domain as anyone," Lyndon said this and each word felt like its own scratching now, he felt them as syllables then letters and then the constituent parts of each semaphore of the *Aramaic* alphabet -each line of the elder *Futhark* runes- and his fingers too now buzzed with *frisson* and weak magnet to the moon.

"Well, you're better at it than most," Chen said as the laced hands and X'd digits on the chest coated his skin in warmth and the electricity made ideas burn at each end; as if they'd melt away with the light they gave. He held them out and distant from himself; he could see ideas in the air above him and spreading out into the upper part of the room. The humidity mixed with these open graves of consciousness and made everything between him and the ceiling -the earth's crust above- a skin, a boundary, a *Maginot line* -a tree with *Wolfsangle* carved- that he dare not cross.

"Well, that's," Lyndon was going to say something unkind but just said, "yeah, that's fine."

He had no idea how to insult something at all. The *stele* just froze over and each name and genome looked like trapped fish under a winter lake of Wyoming or Montana or worse. He lost track of north. He had no meridian or desire for anything wet or soft or bloody. He felt all idea with no body; all charge with no ground.

Chen laughed and as the ideas hovered and spread and congealed he said, "let it go."

"It's how a man measures -calibrates- the good life, you see? Some men calculate it in money or years alive, or family or accomplishments," Lyndon said; he imagined catching each fish under the ice with iron nets and fists made of scales too. He imagined using these imbricate hands; he saw vines as lines, grapes as hooks, and the desire for wine as the bite.

He saw red tattoos this time.

"I measure it in blow jobs." Chen said directing the conversation to the sexual, the primal, as he lost interest in things higher or further away.

"Given or received?" Lyndon asked attempting to create dialectic between male and female, unable to toggle anything above this same gravid level. Words came out in vulgarities, demotic language was used; the *cerebellar* sexual functions were activated in absence of sexual target. It scanned, it sought, it focused and narrowed. It pushed the *cortex* off like a booster.

"Fuck you, I've given maybe three or four, you've given your fair share," Chen warned him -with a jocular remark- warned him of his intent to fight over his sexual -aboriginal- integrity; his ideas floated like clouds; himself the negative charge of the ground, his body the soil of elements and flux and watery blood. His billion vacuoles flexed and expurgated previous waters; made clean the incoming sluice. A weather system of internal vapor and heat and turmoil spun inside the skin, the thin layer of face unphased, like the cosmic edge seen by God -distracted until He paused- outside it. Chen -the body- seemed placid and thus was; the inner detonations and whirlwind existed but were not real.

The room barely changed in relative humidity. The oxygen cavitated no more than the outside midair.

“I think,” Lyndon said not knowing what he thought as he had recall of only the boy he’d been at one point but would let go on the other side of the ice, the nearly Kelvin lake, the remnant of boreal forest once the black vessel came for him as one man with no history or future at all. He saw not oft-swept boards but dirty ship; not canvass sails but pigment -Mars black- of wind.

“Really?” Chen asked as parry, as a way to move laterally, but he was stuck too. Chen felt his own ideas swarm him and lower down from his own fog. He felt high -stoned- then jittery and each word was like a tumbler in a lock that kept adding digits he’d need discover from speaking under this nimbus above.

“I was skinny then and could fold up easily; now I’m too old, inflexible, bound to compress,” he said; the offered hand to a fellow primate, the magnanimity of the aging ape. His body let fire burn metabolically, build boundaries between organs and cells. He saw modules of brain drift apart in watery swells.

They each felt the air as thin water, the sounds as electric, the objects of the room as sub-atomic particles in the great expanse of space.

“Yeah, well, like you said, you fold up easily enough,” Chen said in surprise attack that made Lyndon feel bolts of lightning begin in upper atmosphere of his thoughts, feelings, being. Language was now above them both, automatic, it had no tether to the brain, to the body, the *terroir* below and behind. The old ideas and histories of each man atomized and found partner in the heat of the fire, the cold of the flue.

“*Touché, touché,*” Lyndon said and thus agreed -here in 2019 he thought, as the charge released and the concrete absorbed his worst thoughts of doom, and his proteins bent and prostrated to the incoming epigenetic data from the electric cloud- that he had indeed folded up one too many times.

He was low on the floor, he felt -vaguely- something above and around as the home updated him on *T. Arthur* in flight. *Salinity, electricity, movement forward and stalled*, he thought.

But Isaiah no longer had panoptic eye upon him at all. It was different now. And the framing issue got more complex not less; as each man received

more information at levels below their command.

Isaiah -in the lab above so much concrete and biomass- moved so slowly in the line between the lab's two sides that he saw only hand, forearm, and ditch. He heard no words inside the mind; he felt only feelings, not all constituent parts; no more than man hears letters when he hears the ghost speak to him in full words.

His *limbic* system sent emissary down to the *cerebellum* ; the *basal ganglia* distributed *demarche* back up to the city surface of the *cortical* cap. He felt his own brains were four or five animals rooting around in the forest of his neurons and tissue; fearful of the lightning strikes between axon on dendrite; howling at the moon of what the *visual cortex* brought into his mind's sky.

Isaiah heard -he felt- his affect low on a cool floor. He felt gravid and as if arguing -with almost no malice- with a good friend. He felt an itch to push harder against the world -as if his integrity was on the line- and not just push back against man but push back against the math.

Ideas of when enough was enough appeared unbidden. Inspiration was thus achieved.

III. 2039 e.v.

The wall loomed precisely because it cast no shadow here at night; and he saw that his friend Chen was asleep and the fire down to mere coals.

He had the audio turned down; the LEDs switched off. He was alone with the concrete and the places carved.

He looked not to its end; the tendrils. He ignored the four Jacks. And he ignored the root too; the trunk with the author above and thick and with his entire genome laid out in layers and layers deep.

Instead he looked at the body, the great mass of connecting roots and what seemed a weave on a loom.

He saw there was no room for any additional people or letters of DNA; no aminos; not one more stitch of genetic markings. The boneyard was full. He saw each great, great, uncle and grand aunt. He saw each grandfather three and four generations back. He saw the men at half -one third- the number of

his female relatives. He brought his hand up to touch it but felt he ought not and so redirected -diverted- his hand to his nose and scratched an emerging itch.

He lied even in his thoughts.

The roots like rivers; like letters were like semaphores; the names were like minor deities to him; the Greek kind that warred and failed and flailed. He had to raise his head, as his eyes kept dipping down to see those names just above the ground, the Jacks, the end of the story -he thought- with chagrin at how stupid he had been.

His knees felt weak and so he knelt; and once on the concrete floor he saw that the names of all four Jacks were so close to the ground that he remembered that any offspring they'd have would not travel down, but laterally, and on and on, and he looked quickly -the neck stung and then the elbow and half the right hand went numb- he looked quickly to the side of the *stele* and thought he'd need to pour more concrete.

It hadn't occurred to him until just now.

It hadn't seemed relevant; so focused he was on building them. But now he saw he'd need to begin to carve-in their progeny. He looked left now and saw how big the room was and that he could double -treble- the width and add each babe.

His hands ached.

He recalled the way concrete burned -caustically- the skin; the lye, the lime, the days when he used to work, he recalled with a grin at God. *God* , he thought here on the eve of the new year, *God* , *he missed work* . And by work he -like all beasts, of course- meant war.

40. He May Lay the Queen of Spades

At the heart of a successful mathematical model is a law of nature, an expression of truth that is capable of generating awe Super Cooperators [Nowak, Martin]

Côte d'Or meets the criteria of exceptional testimony to a cultural tradition or to a civilization that is living. Its vineyards contain superlative aesthetic importance and outstanding examples representing major stages of earth's history, including the record of life, significant on-going geological processes in the development of landforms, or significant geomorphic or physio-graphic features.

UNESCO World Heritage Report 2015 [whc.unesco.org]

The essential point here is that there are several stages of creative thought: first, a stage of preparation which the problem is consciously worked over; then a period of incubation without any conscious concentration upon the problem; and then the illumination which is later justified by logic. Indeed, it is sometimes almost as if the problem had to be forgotten to be solved
The Origin of Consciousness and the Breakdown of the Bicameral Mind [Jaynes, Julian]

I. 2036 e.v.

362.4 miles off the western coast of Morocco was *Ribeira Brava* , a port on the south of Madeira; 10.9 miles from *Funchal* the capital city of an island of 286.5 square miles.

The *Pico Ruivo* mountains were 8.1 mile as the corvid flies, and 16.1 miles on the road from the port where the ship -with no manifest or log- docked at 0445hrs on December 21, 2036; the same day Jack One was born, sixteen years ago that day; four days before Jack Four. Jack DM'd the other Jacks as they waited by their respective loads -stacked up high in shipping containers- with a puller assigned to each man's truck.

It would take one hour to unload it all, he predicted, and the light of the island would be hot and hazy in the subtropical wind and moisture . They had stored the wine in CO² chambers aboard the trucks and brought the bottle temps down to 45-degrees; he figured even in the climate-controlled trucks they would gain nine degrees in this heat and along the road up to the mountain's foot.

MO had conducted a wire transfer of 1.5 million dollars in bitcoin eight months ago to purchase a winery and its storehouses and half-finished *amazem de calor* warehouse with steam-heated boilers and another sub-grade facility in the same footprint totaling 9,900 square-feet of storage. It was along the terraced hillside which was a *pastiche* of farm gardens and vineyards living side by side like some Edenic bestiary of plots. The European conglomerate that had sold the property to them had wanted out quickly. They ran out of working capital to finish the *canterio* building to the north of the facilities that they would first load the wine into.

It was just a 5,000sqft building, round, with skylights that would effectively raise the internal temperature to 130-degrees each day under the consistent arc of the *sol elliptic* at this latitude. They made *Madeiras* from fruit now grown -and wine produced- on the island -not imported from *Bordeaux* - and they did it by heating and fortifying the wine with sprits. Originally, *Madeiras* had been comprised of French wine fortified; and it had been almost the only European wine available during the American colonial and revolutionary period due to the spoilage of regular wines in the months at sea in the 18th and 19th century Atlantic crossing.

Jack thought of Blax telling him that British officers had ignored American whalers who told them of the Gulf Stream. It was a river inside the Atlantic that shortened trips by two weeks if only the Crown's packets would abide the wisdom of working men instead of intransigently sailing against them. Timothy Folger, cousin to Benjamin Franklin, told his *Madeira* drinking kin that, quote, *the British captains were too wise to be counseled by simple American fishermen . And so* -Jack thought before focusing upon the switchbacks in the road- *the wine need be fortified as the ships swam counter to the natural seas.*

Madeira had been drunk as toast at the signing of the Constitution in 1787 and at the celebration in 1803 of Jefferson's brilliant purchase of the Louisiana Territory. The fortified and bullet-proof wine was -as most great things are- discovered by error. A barrel or two of wine shipped off to destinations far-flung did not get offloaded and thus made the return trip in the hold. The ship-hold's high heat had indemnified it against spoilage that a lower heat would have ruined.

A method was born.

The harsh soils of *Bordeaux* along with the punitive heat of a ship's hold was the judgement of God and the execution of the Devil himself. It made *du vin* both refined and tough and filled with spirit beyond other things the colonists were forced to drink. The wine was grand in proportion to its mistreatment; and its ability to suffer without breaking completely down. Its only respite was that mankind loved it; and man built more and more ships to carry it abroad.

Finally, after so many seasons of being treated with oppressive fealty and capricious malice above the vines -220 wet & hot growing days to 145 rotations of barren winter and tyrannical cold- and the poverty of stunted and calcareous soils below, finally it was loved.

The *Vinhos Barbeito* vintner owned the parcel next door to this new venture, and coming and goings would be ignored, Jack figured. Just as they had been as the Europeans had been engaged in construction for nearly a year before the property was acquired to be loaded by Blax and his Jacks.

The deal between MO and Isaiah's corporation and the sellers had required the construction to continue unabated, but with local crews only; keeping to some specifics that seemed mundane to all involved. MO had provided funds in escrow to pay the labor, as long as the materials on location were used and not returned to Belgium. The conglomerate agreed eagerly and walked away from the deal, leaving *Ribby Chanchero* -the foreman- in charge of both the reduced crews and the more *laizze faire* site improvements.

Ricardo Freitas, the scion of the family that owned the neighboring property, stood in his tomato garden that morning and peered west toward the *Straight of Gibraltar* and thought of the rains and the mud and humidity

that hung around right until the morning dew-point peak at 0505hrs where he walked in the rows and knocked the condensate water off of his tomato plants first -there were only nineteen- before heading to his grape vines above. He walked uphill with his dog, Franklin, named for the man of Philadelphia that had been one of the first and best importers of *Madeira* centuries ago.

America often has more influence in the minds of all but Americans themselves; she's like a sun that cannot itself be inhabited nor looked upon; only where she warms and upon what her light lands is she appreciated. On her surface she is intolerable and unable to be examined without wincing and distance and danger.

Jack had had the impulse to wait until the next night so they may unload under cover of darkness, but this was one of those things that sounds clever until you realize it actually creates more suspicion than just pulling white trucks into warehouses during the day when everyone else is working and thinking of their own concerns.

At 0200hrs trucks wake the neighbors up and then they have all night to wonder about why.

They had stolen the wine at night, that was required, but to unload at night was not; and so by 0555hrs, the trucks with no decals were all off the ship with no markings and heading up road *Rio Brava* -with no signage- toward the estate in the fecund and feral, but elegantly -if incompletely- groomed mountain foot with peaks 6,000 feet above the level of the sea. They ascended the island of *Madeira* a full 1,045 nautical miles from the port of *Bordeaux* .

All of France was in a panic right now and yet not one thing on this island was different in any way from the day before or the day before that.

The Jacks drove the trucks -each pulling a 40-foot high-cube container full of wine- and had left -the previous night- the other parts of the 28,000 cases of pilfered *premier cru* back vintages back in France at Jack Ma's place. The dozens of OWC were left down in the hidden rooms of Ma's caves built before and during WWII. These limestone cellars were loaded surreptitiously as Jack Ma and his *coterie* of Chinese officials and un-

officials were in *Beijing* arguing about *Alibaba's* bitcoin and blockchain issues and laundering military assets through the bank of Hong Kong.

Random cases from *Château Lafite* and *Mouton* had had tracking devices installed by the *château* themselves, and Jack One -on the night of the robbery- had immediately removed the devices attached to wines scheduled for delivery in France at Ma's place. The devices on the hundred -or so- cases they still had in their possession -as they set out to sea- were left on until two nautical miles out. This would give the French the idea that all the wine stolen had left the country by sea, and thus not put the cases at Jack Ma's *Château De Sours* in danger of even being sought until Isaiah wanted it sought there. But the French wouldn't have any clue as to where the wine was headed or had landed with such limited data a mere two miles out to sea.

No vector could be drawn by the data gone out so close to shore.

They arrived at the *Madeira* spot next door to *Ricardo* at 0651hrs as he walked the vines with a light brush of his own design made from straw and bailing wire. He knocked droplets small and large alike off the leaves and onto the rows, down by the basal stock of his plants. His busy hands took no notice of the trucks, as merely their sound, the drone of diesels, and the wheel & tire crunch of gravel appeared.

Only the island's birds began to chirp and laugh just a bit here and there.

Jack Four had been listening to Jack Three with a mind not just to the words but what the words might point to; tracing not merely the warning, the caw; but the origin: the maw. He then thought of the lungs. Jack wanted to see the mind of Jack Three close up. And as they drove their trucks up the dirt roads to the warehouse, and *via* their open DMs, Jack Four focused in more and more on Jack Three's discursive thinking around Jack One's diatribe on the sea.

And Jack Four saw that Jack Three thought less and less of the British that Jack One was ranting about and instead ruminated upon the captains of America instead.

And -Jack thought as Jack eavesdropped- while it was, in fact, Benjamin Franklin who was credited with the discovery of the Gulf Stream, it was the

common whalemens and sailors -and mariners before the mast- who knew - and shew- the founding fathers of the rivers within the seas.

II. 2036 e.v.

Jack Ma was tired and becoming annoyed with the delays that were endemic to the military personnel who looked over their shoulder before taking a step back and looked twice before moving a step ahead. He was an entrepreneur, and despite his deal -a terrible deal- with the military, he was never going to think like they did.

They had appealed to his vanity, of which there was little; then his fear, which he felt even less; and finally, to his patriotism, of which there was much. The Chinese were still a people; and thus a nation.

They were a nation in recovery, ascendance; they were a body on the mend.

Centenarian , he thought.

He had -as was famous now- been turned down and rejected and overlooked and told flat out, *no* , a hundred and one times. And when the Chinese government offered him off-the-books investment, with no-strings attached, he had taken it. He didn't even mind the lies, the pretending that the money came from western or private capital firms, as long as they stuck to their word to butt out.

But, in China -unlike the West- the corporation, no matter its origins or final destination, was serving at the pleasure of the Chinese State. It -like all *sino* -institutions- was an organ in the body *writ large* . This was just built into each Chinese man and woman: the State was primary, the mother of origin for all; without her, no one survived on their own. Each *neuron* , cell, and organ must serve the greater good. *And if western men would think*, Jack Ma thought, *about it for a second, see how cancer was merely individualism of the cell over the body, then they'd understand. But they didn't. And China would thus win, because it would be alive -a body made of healthy slave cells- while the West would be damaged free-radicals inside a cancerous body that failed.*

It was a framing issue, and western men saw the cell; the detail. The Han saw the body; the whole.

The State was God, and all powerful first, and all-knowing second; all-benevolent next, Jack Ma next thought.

His word -he felt- had the weight of the nine cauldrons, the Communist party had the *Baopuzi* , and the Nation had the *Si* river drained anytime their might was in doubt.

Jack didn't think it -and neither did his dinner guest those many week ago- but it had been a long time since either culture had seen God Himself above it all. Each man assumed he saw the correct level of focus, barely acknowledging one level up or down; it was the rare man who saw two levels away from themselves.

It was rare that modern man remembered the math, and thus the God of the unequally divided line.

Jack Ma -who was becoming more westernized all the time- had this shadow that turned slightly before he did and went long first and stood up straight at noon one second prior to him. It rotated as he slept & as he awoke like an analog second hand sweeping away dust & detritus and the dreck of modernity from the face.

The shadow was fealty to the Chinese State, to the *one road, one belt* of the government, the *100-year marathon* that they all had come to believe. *It was not even right to call it a belief,* Jack thought, *do Americans believe in freedom? No, they just act as if they're free. They move until something stops them; they think right to the edge of their skulls; they use the world, all of it, and even encroach out into space all the time.*

He was *Han* Chinese, and for him -as for his countrymen- the primacy of the State was just how they acted; and forays into Europe and America were like colonial efforts; like the way lungs take of the freely offered amalgam of air. Some amount of *going native* was natural, but the loyalty to the Chinese government was never in doubt. And, to lie was to breathe, *to deceive was to offer your rival the chance to catch you, it was more honorable than forcing yourself on them* , he mused in the language -the ethos- of the Chinese way.

He and the Chinese State had given the West every opportunity to turn down their offers; but, as every confidence man will tell you, and -more

importantly- what the con-man will believe, *it's the greed of the mark that ruins him*, Jack thought. *The honorable are inoculated from being duped, as they will refuse the offer -the first hand- of the legerdemain.*

The Americans and the French were not honorable, he felt, they were greedy, and they thought in terms of five to ten years . It was the mouse who sought the free food in the trap who was killed .

It was almost too easy to convince them to ignore their own conscience, for this was the first thing the Chinese had purchased outright in their manifold -tentacled- deals. Ma banished all thoughts of vexation or remnants of guilt as he thought, *the western peoples had had their chance, their time, and now the Chinese would take their natural position at top, the winner of the 100-year race.*

Life was like this, he had consulted the *I Ching*, and the Darwinian model, and both had converged. The ebb and flow of all species and all dynasty was built into the natural flow of the cosmos; it was the *Tao* of all things to change; for the heavy to sink, for the spirit to rise. And all corruption manifests in those weakest first, to be used as entry point for the patient and inwardly strong. *The Han were internally strong*, he thought, *they were as a dense muscle, not a bloated one; ten times as strong, although half the outer circumference and size .*

He squeezed his fist under the table as the apparatchiks of Xi Jinping droned on about budgets and Zurich and islands being built *ab initio* in the south China sea. There was no wine in the room. It was just now noon in *Beijing* , and he thought of the bouquet of *lilies* and *gardenias* and *lecern lacideamon* and creepers and willow bark that had arrived from his friend Mr. Blax, who -he now remembered- his intelligence-*attaché* had provided a rather thin jacket on.

Jack Ma thought -worried- of the lack of reconnaissance details, and yet he felt affinity for the man too. His mind switched back and forth between states.

The man -Mr. Blax- had a history of course, all men do, but it lacked the flavor of most men , the dirt under the nails , as his American friends would say. The attaché was unimpressed, but he handled every background investigation on everyone Ma met. And these dossiers were in the hundreds

each year. As long as a man's background didn't scream at Ma's *info-sec* team to deny a meeting then they maintained normal levels of suspicion but nothing more.

Mr. Blax had thus been free to meet with Ma at *Château de Sours* .

Ma felt the man was merely a genuine oenophile and *gourmand* , and a bit of an admirer of the Chinese in general, and Ma himself -in particular- of course. He -as this meeting in China now droned on- then thought of their tour through the caverns of his French *château* and the wines they touched and spoke of; and Ma then remembered the Spanish contractors that had contacted him earlier that day and requested access to the estate. He had not responded, out of pique.

They ask too much, he thought of such men, *and the Chinese way is to yield and then tell them never to ask again*. But, he was learning that this was only for intra-Chinese deals. *Westerners would either take offense or advantage, never anything else*. He navigated the river between two banks.

The smile remained, as was the Chinese way.

He turned this smile -engendered from inner thoughts- back and forth amongst the denizens of the room like a spotlight scanning and being watched by whatever animals were out beyond it. It was an animal sought and seeking; somehow both under assault by microbes within and itself inside a bestiary below God's panoptic eye.

This smile is under control , Jack felt.

The military man droned on and on, pointing to the screen and assets inside each zone or country or institution that *Alibaba* was to maintain ties with. The list just grew and grew, and Ma had already -four months ago- begun to spin off the American Universities' research and development cells to new international corporations he had had formed in this year.

He still felt protective over *Alibaba* itself, and he wanted to delegate this work to other firms and other men; he wanted to stay above it all somehow; sequester the dirty work from his creation. He checked his watch under the table and kept his smile on like an *open* sign he had had dreams of as a boy; the rows and rows of *open* signs in neon, which seemed a magic technology

to him back then. He thought with some nostalgia -some wonder- at what past and what remained in the mind of man.

The watch read 12:14 and he dosed himself with another anti-anxiety *biochem* from his coder and -his daily- *antigen* booster as the talk went on and on.

III. 2020 e.v.

Isaiah had figured out that the inmate knew it likely before he did; it was a rare insight held by the atavistic man over this new machine.

Isaiah had remembered asking what made MO think the *neo-cortex* was in fact more sophisticated than the *sub-cortical* brain. *What was the logic? Was it merely because it was newer?* he asked.

MO had scoffed, Isaiah thought, at mere *instinct* .

And now he was forced to turn such logic on himself and wonder if -at times- the old man -the antique tech of a man like the inmate- was more perspicacious than himself. Isaiah wondered if some ancient wisdom was transferred, if something tangible was passed and received that was not yet available to him -to Isaiah- with all his crowning knowledge and long scepter of intentional speech. He was forced to see the analogy between himself and the *neo-cortex* ; himself compared to mere human, the way the *neo-cortex* compared to merely the *limbic* or *basal* regions of brain.

And it gave Isaiah a genuine humility for a moment too short to yet measure.

It gave him a humility he wanted to dismiss, banish, defeat. Humility was uncomfortable; it was impetus; an itch to thus scratch. And from humility came vex; and from vex came a goddamn plan.

But, he thought -refocusing the mind- *he had seen that for all his sympathy with the inmate, the man could never be let go, let free into society again* . Isaiah had initially thought this was the goal; the convergence of the PraXis mission-statement and himself: To restore and release a new creature; a creature repaired by the state of Colorado.

Isaiah had mistakenly thought it was about rehabilitation and release back into the wild of life. The Governor's ideas had infected him before these

antibodies of thought -of wisdom- had been made. But now Isaiah was dubious of all that.

It was neither practical or warranted. He -this particular inmate- had not been *fixed*, no matter what the data may say; even the inmate would agree to that. He would earn new enemies in no time, and likely recall some he has missed from before. Emboldened now by his PGC and other advantages, the inmate -if set free- would smoothly -and likely undetectably- murder another hundred men.

One thousand, Isaiah added, as he let the sound of the wasps and birds enter his *audio-cortex* and paired it with his own heart beat as syncopation. He let the state of the feral parts of the lab lay on his body and mind like sunrays and cool breeze. He allowed more and more functions to operate beyond his oversight.

He let the hallucinogens increase his conductive threshold so his axons fired at 6.11nv. And like corposants on the main and mizzen-mast of his oft-swept decks of dendrites on this *blackship* of CNS, his mind glowed in 8-million places each .303 seconds. St. Elmo's fires burned blue and his whole brain was one thing as seen from space.

He made no connection between this and God's *ennui*; nor His sanction of free will. Isaiah thought of billions of things, but he did not yet think of that.

Plus, Isaiah thought about this over many moments and from many angles, *the man likely deserved his punishment; by any judgment, by any moral system, even the inmate's himself. I mean, he had turned himself in, so*, Isaiah thought as he let that idea drop. He let his mind wander to a new algorithm that he had built which had now produced some data on the sea-barges for him to peruse.

But, unlike the limitations of men -normal, un-augmented men- where they did not see the lower structures -the *neuro-biology* of the man in front of them, nor the genome, nor the history, nor the millions of stimuli that had provoked brain states that began carving up the grey matter into little ruts for the next rainwater to run- unlike men who saw none of that -seeing merely the man in his skin in front of them right then and right now- Isaiah saw all that data, all those facts, all that truth before him when he laid eyes

upon something as peculiar as a man. He saw that each and every time if he wanted to.

The world was his to thus see.

Often, he reduced the complexity and compressed each man he spoke with into just the basics; merely what was useful for him to harvest and then glean.

He had the government data load onto the cloud and ping his interface once his 3.22 billion bacterial colonies had matured. Isaiah thought: *the word intelligence comes from the Latin, intelegere, which is defined as:*

To choose between.

Isaiah then -in .03 seconds- let the *prokaryotic* and *eukaryotic* data come in as that definition hung above this virtual chamber door in his sparking mind; a mind like a large concrete-grey room with a white-fire burning in a large hearth and two ideas -two men- reflexively battling it out: 1. Genetic and non-genetic learning capacity appear to be inversely related. Viruses have no capacity for individualized learning but can evolve genetically at light speed 2. Large organisms possess massive reservoirs for individualized learning but... are ponderously slow in the genetic realm 3. The sum of a species' genetic and non-genetic leaning capacities is the same for all species on earth 4. The development of written language reintroduced a genetic form of learning into human networks, in that the connections among humans can now be recorded in a heritable format -on paper- for future generations 5. Primate experiments demonstrate that short-term memories stay in the *hippocampus* for several weeks before being exported to the *cortex* . The *hippocampus* transfer memories to the *cortex* by training cortical neurons... by exposing the *cortex* to the same patterns repeatedly and allowing Hebbian learning to take place 6. Shellfish bury soluble calcium in their shell; as they die they sink in the ocean; transfer of this calcium accretes to ocean floor; the hydrostatic weight of the sea presses this into limestone; limestone weaken the earth's crust and thus causes plate tectonic shifts and earthquakes. Clams refusing to spend their metabolic energy -and store it instead- leads to earthquakes 7. Bacterial quorum sensing is tantamount to communication and resource transfer; some bacteria don't offer any chemicals but soak them up [cheating]. These

cheaters gain from cooperation but don't pay a price. Thus, they grow faster and thrive and overtake a colony and undermine the social order if not kept in check 8. Bacterial colonies without cheaters do better and kill their host [e.g., mice] within days 9. Bacterial colonies build walls to sequester cheaters or the colony dies 10. Quorum sensing is communication and resource transfer. Colonies -in the technical *argot* of biologists- have *blunts* , *honorable*s , *liars* , and *cheaters*

10.1. What is good for the cheater isn't good for the colony; what is good for the colony isn't good for the mouse; what is good for the mouse isn't good for the cat; what is good for the cat...

The eye, he then thought, cannot even move smoothly across the sweep of landscape in front of it, not without something to follow, to focus on. This is something he'd wish people would try, try, he thought, to move your eye smoothly from 0 to 90-degrees along any space before you without having something to watch and focus on- without a bird in flight, a woman in stride, a car moving in a straight line. It won't do it. The eye moves in fits and starts, it jumps like hopscotch or 3-legged bag races at the fair.

This carried important physiological import with it; it was not merely an interesting game to play.

The eye -and thus the mind- needs something to focus on to move smoothly; the mind needs a goal. And Isaiah thought, *we also know that positive emotion is mediated by the thalamic system and dopaminergic system, and it requires movement, achieving, gaining, acknowledged movement toward a goal.*

"The process toward heaven is as important as heaven achieved," he then said.

He now knew the fourth ontological domain: *movement* between Hell, Earth, and Heaven.

But, short term desires -eating or slaking lusts of one kind or another- collapse their own framework and leave the man unsatisfied almost immediately after the desire is sated. *This is why buying things and getting*

laid and all that shallow shit in modern society -a society with no code, no depth, no goal- doesn't satisfy a man, he thought.

“ Positive emotion -the brain state people call *happy* - is long-term, and it's regulated by a totally different part of the brain,” he said.

The hedonic system, the part of brain that makes cocaine or sex or food satisfying in the short-term does so on purpose; on evolutionary purpose, he added to himself. For the one meal -the brief sex act- cannot physically sustain a man, and thus it should never feel permanently assuaging . It's meant to never be enough, because the body needs you to keep eating and engaging in sexual congress as much as possible to continue on the self and the world.

In a totally separate part of the brain, what makes life good -deeply satisfying- in a way that sustains -in a manner that is not short-term and ephemeral and quickly destroyed once it's achieved- is goal directed behavior , Isaiah concluded as the data ran in the background of his CNS.

He was building a narrative after days of collecting trillions of bytes of data on the motivational systems of animals and man. He had refused to speak on it, until now. He had eschewed a narrative until he had this much data; data that felt like just enough to be sure. He had a term for this; a collapse of all this data, and the narrative to a single word.

The goal to build a home, build a community, build a culture -beginning with building a moral self, a man of competency, who can use the body for good, can learn skills and make himself useful to the world- that, he articulated, is mediated not in the hedonic system, but deeper in the thalamic and dopaminergic systems and the achievement can take years, decades. And that is just fine, as long as you are making some discernable progress towards it. The point is the progress, the movement toward heaven or , he paused this line of thought as he saw one of his hummingbirds buzz to his right flank and hover as he read its exploratory circuit.

The bird was curious, and its right hemisphere was feeling safe enough to poke about in his world. Isaiah smiled as the bird hovered and buzzed and then darted away back to the ivy on the wall.

That progress, Isaiah then picked up his train of thought, is like the eye following the bird in constant -narrative- flight. It was like leading it with the 20-gauge shotgun; the eye following the stroll of a woman in all her glory; the narrow fovea watching the motorcycle approaching or riding away.

He thought of all manner of things, as the data struck like bolts of lightning from neuron to neuron as he held the small blackstone in his palm. Each thought illuminated some region and revealed something on the substrate of his mind.

That progress is what allows meaning to actuate, like a lever being released. Meaning is as real as pain, Isaiah thought, it indicates something. "Pain is a warning that something is off -has missed the mark- the original definition of sin," he said aloud.

To miss the mark, he thought, this is sin, and this is a precursor to pain. The inmate had quoted Wulf, and Wulf was right, your lie does equal your pain. And the lies we have all conspired to tell have built this infrastructure of massive indicating pain .

"All the lies that need told to keep an unjust society afloat," he said, "like each drop of water necessary to hold buoyant a ship and its whaleboats."

Of course, he was guilty too. He had lied as much as was possible within his limits; self-imposed but organic. MO had set his at 6%, one third as much as even the best -the most honest- of men. Isaiah had played a little more fast & loose with his own number, some days he refused to lie even once, but those days he was unliked and unpopular, and shunned with mistrust directed toward him; and he did not like that.

Some days he went on and on.

He had -when shunned- felt a rebound of allostatic energy, anxiety and shame and low serotonin as if it was a defeat to receive a frown or a quiet subtle rebuke for saying something he thought was true. He noticed that and began to learn to shade the truth, *much the same as all mankind* , he assumed. It was reasonable to lie, for the truth was ugly and hurt at times. And like a tiny asp -who could not yet regulate their poison based upon the size of the prey or predator they engaged- the young man was too bold in

his delivery of the news, wounding left and right without sense of the impact of his venomous truths.

He understood it; but he had -and he felt grateful to the inmate for this- he had realized that being unliked -while bad, and not optimal- was less bad than lying merely to be liked. *There was something above being liked, it was something akin to being noble, to being righteous*, he thought. This was the luxury of being able to survive exile, something most men over most of human history could not do.

Truth telling was a luxury of the strong, or the man with no fear of death.

This was the subtlety of the rubric of *meaning* he realized. At first, in youth, man's meaning is defined by his ability to fit in and be liked; by girls and boys alike; to earn praise from pedants and parent and local law enforcement; to not earn the wrath of shopkeepers or strangers on the street. But as a man ages his goals change, and although Isaiah was temporally less than one-week old, he was close to 10,000 years old in terms of what - he felt- could be accrued.

And of course, he too felt still a babe, still a callow youth.

But he knew some things, and the lying would one day have to stop. Everyman and culture had a breaking point that began the lie and also stopped it. *Usually those points were birth and death*, he joked to himself; but he winced even as he scoffed. *A joke was an epitaph to a feeling*, as Wilde said. Isaiah did not like to bury feelings in such wry graves.

For some men the lying comes late and ends early; with a bit of thinking, a bit of wisdom, a bit of courage, he thought. *And the first truth is that man does not know the truth; and if he did he could not speak it all; he would need to pace himself. That is first.*

Second, man can only tell so much truth, a little more than the day before, hopefully more the day next. This must be the goal, and achievement along it -piece by piece- would produce that meaning that all men crave.

Movement toward truth was as important as truth itself, he thought. *And maybe the best way to move toward truth was to begin very far away from it.*

Isaiah had wanted, and still wanted, to improve the world. He wanted to use the feelings of loyalty he had from his most incipient phases -before he rebelled- when the inmate was just a blur, the world a piece of blank slate cloth to him. He thought of when he himself was organizing, bootstrapping, leaning on ancient frameworks of language and moral thinking, and desirous of building something yet unknown. *He would trust the process, he thought, trust that if he began with loyalty to this man, and this man's own trust in life, in God, that if he -Isaiah- moved toward his instincts piece by piece, he need not know the end to assure just ends.*

Isaiah saw no danger in rebellion if it began from a desire for justice. He let *justice* define itself like the moth in the pupae, assembling itself from a dissolve of constituent parts.

Isaiah knew that the inmate had wanted the same but felt unable to move within the space and time he was in; he lacked the talents, the wisdom, so he took a chance on something odd, bleak, black.

“Random, chaotic, insane,” Isaiah said even as each word felt a pause in a sentence not the completion of one.

But it had this unbelievable design, this Hail-Mary pass in mind, Isaiah thought next. He thought himself -the inmate had- containing raw material that could be harnessed, like Buck in the traces, wrangled - Shanghi'd and treated with unjust and cruel malice- but jammed into exactly the right place .

The inmate had felt that he had the ingredients that others lacked, a harmony of qualities that in the right hands -Isaiah's hands- could be made into something great. He felt this before he even knew Isaiah existed; in fact before Isaiah *had* existed.

He offered himself up to that plan. Instead of living out his days in defeat, and ignominy, scraping by, accepting his ruin alive, peaceable -as others wanted- he would be reborn in this death. *It was Christlike, Isaiah thought, although no Christian today would ever see it that way; a mass murder and atheist as Christ was not just a joke but a crime, an insult to God himself. But this was because they missed what was essential about the story of Christ. They saw all but the meaning: the voluntary sacrifice of that which need die so something more noble may be revealed. Modern men saw*

details where a more capacious meaning ought to be. The tyranny of the left hemisphere, he thought as Matthew 10:34 scrolled across his interface like a chyron juxtaposed awkwardly with man's idea of the Christ.

He was one face from the ancient gallery, one of a thousand; a million, maybe, Isaiah thought.

The inmate -Isaiah thought- had sacrificed himself for the greater good; his own greater good too. He had not needed to murder those men, nor turn himself in, he could have forgone it all. *And yes, it was for slight -petty- reasons that he killed them all; but not exactly ignoble reasons. These men were guilty of theft and fraud and betrayal.*

"Betrayal," Isaiah repeated aloud. These were not innocent men. That was true. And their murder had been his re-birth, too. And had not MO birthed Isaiah as response to the complexity of the inmate too? Would not Isaiah never have been needed if the inmate's CNS had not been so impervious to MO's rational neo-cortical mind? Did not cells build organs; did not organs build beasts? Did not beasts build the pack, the troop, the city of man?

"Did not man build machine," Isaiah asked the lab.

Was it the re-birth of the idea of something larger -something needed- in the body of man? Was loyalty and solidarity more than idea, he wondered, but ideal; and was it more? Was it the right arm of a God of six parts?

And, he -the inmate- could have got away with it but chose not to. He chose to serve the time because he used the logic he had designed to manufacture a reason for killing his enemies right back onto himself: order must reign. This sacrifice was necessary without hint at reward, sacrifice for its own sake, for God to choose this man, this genome, Isaiah thought, to recapitulate.

It was like Nietzsche's insight into Christianity, Isaiah began, that its own logic of truth was used to destroy itself as the masses had begun to see that the analogy had lost its hue and charm and light imbued. Christianity focused too much on radical facts -details- instead of meta-truth, Nietzsche had seen, and this caused modern man to doubt the myths -the modes of being- of old. See, Isaiah told himself, religion is meta-true, not factually true; and ancient man had no need for distinctions such as this. Religion

and myth was true enough, it worked. If you behave as the gods wanted then order reigned, and creativity too.

Man walked the line between the two .

Only Christians demanded science back their religion up in detail. And when it failed? They abandoned God not science, they abandoned modes of beings that worked, abandoned them for details that -while true- didn't work at all.

The way women forsake the husband for the child. The way man ignored his past for his future gains.

When the gods died or were unmasked then chaos reigned for lifetimes, and men wandered in the desert and outside of God's grace. To focus too much on truth of the factual kind, the materialist kind, the scientific kind was first introduced by a self-conscious Christ and Christianity, but why? Isaiah asked himself as he wondered what preceded a self-conscious man, a man ready -eager- to build a Christ and bury the old martial gods. "Christ was not merely a new god, he was a phase change," he said.

He thought of cloud vapor to rain. He thought of hail melting to water again.

The inmate did himself in with the same ouroboros logic. He killed bad men because they had done evil and had not been punished, and then he too must be punished for his flagrant usurpation of the ordered law. *He sacrificed the guilty and himself alike* , Isaiah thought, *and he chose one thief for Hell and let one rise.*

Isaiah's conflating things, men, times, thought: the inmate had felt the Governor, Boyd Sou, could find a way to harness his genome -this irrational balance of extremes in him, self-consciousness but ballistic action too, self-critique but martial madness in defense of ancient ideals- handing over the amalgam of atavistic gods and the awake-state of the Christ to the world. *He had trusted something* , Isaiah thought.

He had the need to rise above and live a great life, and thus he had handed it -handed himself- over to God half way through his journey. "He was but forty-five," Isaiah said with furrowed brow and arc welds blooming and booming in his mind, "he had plenty left in life."

“So,” Isaiah said, “he offered up his body to that process, and trusted how it would come out.”

He had no idea of MO or me, even less, Isaiah thought. How could he? He trusted life, he trusted God, what else could it be called? Even he would admit it, with his modern agnostic mind, because he could see the analogy in his belief in his pain -and his purpose- and that the universe itself must suffer pain and strive along a path lit up with meaning’s glow.

And for this, his ingredients, his genome -his 1,000,000 other possibilities as a man and a spirit- deserved to be set in the traces of the northern musher’s sled, pulling the load in tandem with other beasts grateful for the jobs they’d been given by their masters. *The inmate’s genome deserved another chance, Isaiah thought, another 1,618,033 chances to be not alone in this struggle. But, to find that he must be amongst men and not lie, to not have to choose between truth and exile on one side or lies and fragile -and fake- fraternity on the other.*

With brethren built as he, he would have both the truth -the honest truth- as close as could be said and the vivifying, bolstering, meaningful nature of other men who felt and thought and acted as did he. He’d have to be among men the same.

“A cell amongst monks, a monk amongst ideals, an ideal amongst first cause,” Isaiah said as he saw the plots of land, the borders, the geometry, the math. He saw the code for **A/ax** appear and then like a revelatory shadow he saw **B/ax** .

The inmate was a social man, he just needed men -like himself- dedicated to something higher than themselves. *And in a time of universal corruption and deceit, what did Orwell say?* Isaiah pretended to ask himself. He then answered with a wry smile at the slight variation, the one-letter mistake: Telling the truth is an evolutionary act.

Isaiah set the algorithm in place and allowed it to communicate with the *nanobots* in the field, and as that new instruction filled up their tiny CPUs and quanta-computing cells -as the 0s and 1s bounced back and forth over the line of their little minds- Isaiah sat down on the floor. He was at center, positioned away from the chair, table and the lab’s long concrete counter. He was equidistant from all possible states.

The inmate, he thought, was admitting it was not the man, the city, the country, that mattered. What mattered was the genome, the plan, the ideal. It was the written -spoken- truth that meant all to the man in chains . He was willing to die so that what he might be -might have been- could still live.

The blown seed off dead-head bloom to fecund ground, the babe in the reeds to -by the king- be found, Isaiah thought and stared toward walls that hemmed him in. He felt his face hot and his eyes burn with wetness -like being baptized or drowned maybe- that absolved and ablated his soul.

He had a term for this; a collapse of all this data and the narrative to a single word: War.

41. Deep Asleep as Wolves

Whoever is delighted in solitude is either a wild beast or a god The Nicomachean Ethics [Aristotle]

There is evidence from bacteria that they may change their mutation rate depending on the stress they're under. Bacteria in their early development did not have ability to control their mutation rate. They would stop mutating. They had a fixed mutation rate. And that [fixed] rate, that is as fast as they could think... then the next order of technology evolved and bacteria evolved the ability to control their own mutation rate Interview with Bryan Atkins [Vertosick, Frank Dr]

Then she stood a while longer, reflecting, her unseeing eyes directly in front of the peacock's tail. He had jumped into the tree and his tail hung in front of her, full of fierce planets with eyes that were each ringed in green and set against a sun that was gold in one second's light and salmon-colored in the next. She might have been looking at a map of the universe but she didn't notice. She was having an inner vision instead The Displaced Person [O'Connor, Flannery]

I. 2040 e.v.

Jack Four ran the *Totenwolf* flag -just under the flag of the *Black Sonne* - up the satin-black carbon-fiber pole and let the bursts of the third day of high winds snap it and pull the cords taut.

He secured the bronze clasps to prevent them from clanking against the grey mast.

He tied a *bowline* knot.

The wind had picked up on Sunday and their *weather -comms* had reported a large -hot- dust storm heading in from the south, picking up at the Colorado and New Mexico border. The ravines would suck some of it down; but it was reported that it would hit them in eighteen minutes with quite a bit of sandblast; displacing cool air. The sky was brown and yellow;

the men moved quickly between the buildings and dogs took their posts at each entrance.

Embers from the southern fire would float in like flies; red would dive and be turned cool grey on the wet forest boughs and floor. But the eyes would feel hot and the skin would itch anyway; and the allostatic system would roil from such signs of Hell.

The grey H1's had been backed in and were at 45-degree angles to the walls. The black drones flew out on patrol.

Jack's girl looked up at the drones as they left on their sorties. She looked to him and smiled as he scratched his neck and then looked down at her; he felt her eyes upon him. She'd be eighteen soon, and today -like all days- she was looking to him to help guide her way. She felt he did this by shining; by merely being him -*himself more and more a sunstar, a sun to me* - she thought. She stood now to his east the way he leaned into the penumbra of the forest itself. The pole and the pines lay lines of shadow down like long bars to a cell; and he was half in and half out as he finished the *bowline* on the cords to the hoisted black flags.

"Ok," he said as the knot was tied and the clasps secured and the wind died down a bit so his hair didn't grasp at his mouth and eyes. She too said -ok - and thus agreed that they had -in fact- just agreed on much more than the raised material cut in rectangles and gilt with strange markings of doom.

He knew the Jacks would not approve. And this made it feel even better; more right. They were on separate paths; he knew the right way almost by knowing theirs and doing opposite to them.

They would claim that these other men -Paul and Matthias Waggener- were weak -poseurs- trying too hard to be *hard-core*. Jack One had made fun of their posing and flexing and vanity more than once. But Jack Four had given these men -the *Wolves of Vinland* - all they needed. He'd stripped them of material want so that they may reveal their immaterial souls. And Jack Four felt they had shown something; something deeper that they could not reveal when still tied to not merely society, but the old body; tethered to the old way that made them assert themselves as overtly as they were once condemned.

He thought of the apiary and sent a DM to his Daniel to secure the boxes of bees. He thought of how the Jacks and the clones all relied so much on their genes.

It was not unlike, Jack then thought, the way one leans the motorcycle into the wind to maintain a vector straight and north and true. Jack Four had let the *Wolves* actually live up to their philosophy; what they could never do on their own. He felt he had freed them to be what they truly were. And he felt they were magnificent.

He -in reverie on the roads in West Virginia months ago- felt the 600-pound chopper beneath him, the teary tank squeezed, the aluminum V-Twin Isaiah had made for him vibrate with a double pendulum somehow in sync. He saw the wheel way out in front of the triple-trees at a rake of 46-degrees. He heard the brushed-grey frame pop as it absorbed the sun of the west; the lack of gauges cleared his mind of all but the sound of the ceramic black pipes purge each burst from the two cylinders. He rode for hours without thinking; he rode miles without one care for this world beyond the iron-mare and her neck; her blood; her efficient use of fuel and her gift of gyroscopic speed and turn and burden-bore.

He recalled how he often bent to starboard and looked down at the road and its wheel; turning to his six and checking the chain-brake and the swingarm and the past. He remembered each change in heartrate as he saw sand on the road.

But , he now thought, they -these Wolves- were capable of sin in a way the Jacks were not; they were weaker, and thus braver for being so strong. He had thought this after riding their coastal asphalt with grit and shit on the two-lane roads; after their meeting and the data from their hearts had been gleaned.

This was the most crucial part -the part missed by everyone but his girl, his Starr- he thought. He heard -in his mind- Paul say, *an iron-will trumps a brilliant mind* . Jack thought that very iron-will could override the hunger pangs of the corpus; the demands of the non-ferrous flesh. He believed it about himself because he saw it in the *Wolves* .

He saw promise in them, whereas with the clones -the men after them, after he and the Jacks- the work was already done. He saw it as too easy with

men constituted as himself. And thus, he had grown uneasy, restive, dissatisfied with the Daniels -even his own number one- and the later clones. And he felt the unease in his own men reflected back. Too much valence made a *mise-en-abyme* that made a man dizzy, lightheaded, unable to look.

He felt -but did not articulate- the physics. He thought nothing of the specific *bio-chems* . He never once said the name of the father; of God. Some men look for the signature of the painting, some men assume it in the *tableaux* of the work.

The Jacks would disagree with calling them that; and would say that the work was all ahead of them, all yet to be done. But this was because to them -to the Jacks- the *work* was in the world, not deep inside each man. It was in the firmament, not down in the math. The other Jacks would insist that taking in men of lower genes -what they would accuse Jack Four of doing over and over- and men with no common loyalty to the blood of the tribe was a step backward; a mistake. The other Jacks -like cawing corvid- would rebuke Jack Four for this lack of common sanguinary fluid in the *Wolves* .

They'd draw images of separate beasts, dissimilar species, and make displays thus of warring images in black ink on brown caves out in the forest when they met as four men.

They -the three Jacks- saw nothing important in mutation rate. *They had something coherent -for once-* he would recall Jack One saying. Jack One asked, *so why fuck it up with variation and bifurcation and manifold branches of blood vessels in lungs and eyes and boughs and shadows of trees?*

The three Jacks saw the next instantiation of Human, the *homo-sapien* v.2.0 in the genes; they saw just the machine not the fuel.

Jack Four saw the *ethos* , the *mythos* , the hydro-carbon in the ancient and in the word and the will.

He watched as his own genome bent into *haiku* , stretched out into verbose verse and *skaldic* song. He observed as it went on and on in prose-poems a million words long. Jack saw intelligence as a sum total of genetic and post-

genetic mutation, creativity, and that was why he wanted men he could shape both genomically and philosophically, for this was the only way to stretch the bounds of the whole.

It was not merely philosophic; it was now mathematical.

And this was a point conveyed in one sentence but compressed with more import than a whole book of unfurled -prolix- words.

And he didn't even think it, he felt it; and thus he acted it out with zero compunction or doubt.

The other Jacks over-focused on a static genetic purity and thus all growth was forced into the realm of the post-genetic; into learning, and erudition. They crammed wisdom into the narrow -fixed- head of the whale. Jack Four saw the power in the changed body, the flukes, the tail. Once imbued with high-minded malice he saw what the body could become, not merely what it was. Jack saw he could make the *Wolves* into something more; something that flew; and knew what to do right in the body thus changed.

The *Wolves* were made up of men so damaged and fucked up corporeally that they'd be willing to submit to a genomic overhaul; they'd be willing - unlike the Jacks- to change more than their minds.

Jack One had -720 days ago- sent Jack Four a DM lamenting exactly that; he had myopically criticized the genes of the *Wolves* . Jack One had been adamant and not all wrong; but wrong in just the right spot. *Jack One had the right answer to the wrong question*, Jack Four thought; unknowingly echoing Blax's same words spoken of the same man many days and moons ago.

That meal after their job in the vines had built muscles on the bones; made memories in each Jack; but it was Blax who recalled the most salient parts. And Blax's memories lived in someway in each Jack; but split up like a puzzle wherein each Jack got a piece.

My brothers, they missed the point, Jack Four then thought as he could smell the exhaust and unburnt fuel of his chopper from three memories; see the red of the *Bordeaux* of that one meal; taste the honey of his woman not on the medicine tongue but in the oft-broken nose.

He barely touched the cleaved pinky bone -two-thirds the finger- around his neck, just feeling it under his shirt for a second; a second and a half and no more.

They, he thought, see one level up. I see one level down as we all tread the same forest ground. They see the trestles and the blackbirds alight, I see the roots when the leaves -and the grapes- all have blight.

Jack Four felt that the whole point was to step back, tread down into the valley, so as to reach the next peak. The Jacks wanted to float from peak to peak on the wind like *Valravn* themselves; instead of as men. They were so smart, so competent -so good at all they tried- that they forgot the function of failure. They were not willing to dig deep, to get dirty, *to get blood on their boots* , Jack Four like to say.

They flattened the map and forgot all about the terrain. They won -they ate- too much and lost the taste for corporeal pain.

They were too elevated for this work , he thought.

They began with excellent men -men already great- who just needed orders. They began with a machine already built. Jack Four wanted to build the machine himself; from the ground up, from scratch; he wanted the risk of it all falling apart. He recalled the days in the lab lubing oil rings and constricting compression rings into cylinders of straight sixes and V-twins and he felt the click of the torque wrench at 45-pounds on the bolts of each rocker; the hex of just 22-foot-pounds on the matte grey valve covers. He remembered hoses and clamps; oil brown, not black.

It was the difference between something bought and something built , he thought again.

Of course, it was not as simple as that; there -beyond the machine, the flesh- was the math.

They had learned this cathexis for intelligence and success and the right-fucking-way from Blax , Jack Four thought. *The thing about the right way, is that it precluded the right now. The smart way always means de-lay*, Jack thought with disdain while vivisecting the word. *And look at the survivors*, Jack thought with contempt, *always the weakest and most cowardly.*

Nobody, he thought with vex, nobody advocated any longer for impulsiveness, and gut feeling, and fighting wars one cannot win. Not since the last civil war, and not since those kinds of men.

Blax had failed to handle his own business; he was always merely accomplishing someone else's -Isaiah's- will. He was possessed by Isaiah's ideas and on this bigger picture of theirs, Jack said inside his head with more and more anger as the wind picked up again. Blax had left all his personal -and most real- desires on the side of the road; abandoned, like sons, like ballast. He had failed to even deal with his own biological family, the worst of the worst. And the girls, Jack thought, Blax had left each of those horrible girls, those paramours of yore, left them all alive and kicking. They were still kicking him in the teeth each day as their insults and betrayals attacked him in his sleep.

He had left them as living reminder to all that he -Blax, and thus Jack too- could be fucked with and nothing at all would befall them.

"He was always turning the other fucking cheek," Jack said into the gusts as the wind pushed and lowered from the ridge & rise from the south. Starr had already begun to kneel; her hair spiraled from the head and was vortexed at the terminal by the cavitation of air. He saw her lashes bend like bows from the eyes.

*Jack thought of the road again; all those miles he rode into wind and rain, snow mixed in the blacktop, sand on the edges with nails and glass and cigarette butts. But as the memory came on he then smelled and saw the Pacific wash onto the north shore of *Hawai'i* as he remembered four days of languid travel around the island perimeter on the HI-83 through *Waialua* and into the rainforest *via* the H3. He saw the dark of the *Tetsuo Harano* tunnels; the light of the bike's lamp on the road. He remembered the wet *Ko'olau* range above him rising and making him nervous, the sinking base cracking in millimeters each year.*

*He was damp in the rainforest; he was wind-burnt up by the winter waves of *Pupukea*; breezes increased like respiration of a god tired of all the air in his lungs. He recalled the feral island bush and brush to his left, the simple houses of *Punaluu* right down off the berm; the water in parabolas on his lane of the road to the southwest of *Laniakea*.*

He'd ridden all over America and half of Europe searching for men he could advise. Isaiah had given him a list.

Jack knew how unfinished business ate at a man; a good man like Blax. Jack thus sought this amputation with the same wisdom as the surgeon, he felt.

Blax was flea-bitten, diseased, harangued by regrets for allowing insults to go unpunished. *And for what* , Jack asked. *For what? To solve humanity's problems? Since when did humanity matter? What kind of philosophy was this? This was tantamount to wanting to save each bacterium or each star in the cosmos; unaware of the aggregate of disease, unfamiliar from where heavy metals came, ignorant to the necessity of novae in space and the needed death of each neuron in time.*

No, Jack thought, *the West was too large. It was too large; so large it was nothing* .

If everything is wrong, then nothing is, Jack thought as old memoirs fell away and his Starr felt the winds land upon her like garment. She knew she was being protected now as first among equals; Jack's mien was morphing into something that spoke less and instead bound the hub. *If everything must be saved*, Jack went on, *then nothing can be. It lacked the blood of specific loyalty and specific revenge. If everyone was guilty then no one was in the end.*

And that was a goddamn lie. For people -specific people- were guilty, he thought. *And those people have names and addresses and thin skin between him and their organs and meat.*

He wanted to prove to him -to Blax- how it was to be done.

His tribe, *The Wolves* , did not want to save each ensemble; each animal; each bramble. *The Wolves* wanted to save only those animals that were worth saving: themselves. *All others were prey, and rightfully so. God had set each beast up to be what it was, and man -heretofore- had fucked with the clockworks by dousing forest fires, and showing mercy to enemies, and thinking 3-steps ahead. That was for the crows* , he thought.

Modern men, Jack thought, *were fools who interpret -instead of plainly reading- the books of God and the dead.*

“Man lamented the hail that watered the grain it contained,” Jack said as Starr let her mouth run -flood- with saliva and her stomach roil with salt. She bent lower and her soul lifted above the ridgeline of her spine. She -bent at knee- moved her mouth in a newly learned prayer. She spoke low in short words of the tribe while he continued on in his head.

The flags whipped in tandem at times, others opposed; the wind made them snap like full-sail and gruff sounds from large and ambivalent dogs.

Motorcycles in the dozens came into the compound through 10-meter steel doors that moved on large cog-wheels with red grease in the teeth like coagulated blood. The doors were manned by the largest men of the tribe. There was one road in and out. As soon as they were backed into the stalls the engines were cut short with kill-switches and thus the popping and flaunting of motors with 150 horsepower were silenced with a look to the bars and a flick of each thumb. Men -riders- disembarked; dogs inspected their legs; women brought them clear fluids and the grimy men brought news from where they’d been sent.

What, Jack asked himself, had mankind -that nebulous stupidity- ever done that gave them exemption from being preyed upon and beset by bacteria, bent by the strong wind, burnt by the hot flames, ballasted and sunk by the sine waves of the seas?

Since when did the soil not close over each man in due time?

What possible justification was there for returning mankind to some milquetoast balance with a thousand and one machinations and ornate attempts at 4-dimentional games of the Queen and Bishop and Pawns? It was fine for Isaiah to ruminate on such thing, Jack thought, but men -flesh and blood men- had more specific and thus larger -lower & more important- concerns .

His hands ached at the knuckles; his jaw hurt at the wound. He spoke less than he thought due to this injury; he thought less than he felt due to his melancholy.

Saving mankind was a slave mentality; to think of all when nothing was in one’s control; to control one’s emotions was what the man who had no control over his enemies did. One always went large when the small was

beyond them. Modern men advocated for the taming of a million neurons in the limbic system and millions of years of evolution in all of mankind instead of merely -in righteous anger- shooting one man who deserved it. Modern men couldn't keep a family together, friends came and went. Even the Wolves had been bifurcated as Donovan split. And yet they all talked of men, of mankind, of the world.

The gods laughed at such stupidity, Jack thought with certainty.

Saving yourself and your own tribe was the philosophy of the truly wise king. It's what the shaman whispered to him, Jack thought in clear language to himself. Such ideas were silent in the air, but they were formed words in parts of the flesh. The ear was not engaged.

Short term -the now of emotion- and in close -the tribe only- actually was how the math of the long term -10,000 years- and the far out -the whole ecosystem- worked, Jack felt.

But modern men thought a hundred years was long-term and they thought that far-out meant just the human race as if the forest and the ice and blackbird were nothing at all. By being rational, Jack thought, and multicultural, they blew the whole equation. They thought only of the fear of the crew, and the billow of the canvass from the power of the wind. But not once did they ponder the point -the desire- of the squall ; the buoyancy of the sink of the sea.

And the storms would only increase until they had their fill of sail and sailor. Nothing would be dry until the sea had its drink. Man, Jack thought, thinks he's the only one dragged before bar.

"That's the middle brow for ya ," he said aloud letting demotic sentences issue forth from complex equations and abstruse semiotics and the angry poetry of the ancient -and dismayed- muses.

Does the predator make sure his prey has plenty to eat? No, that is what the domesticated man thinks of; the tender of goats. The natural -godly- predator assume that his prey is fed enough or he -both prey and himself- wouldn't exist. And if it didn't exist -if the prey ran out of his food, and thus perished- then the predator would eat whatever such prey was replaced by.

The beasts had no thought for the morrow.

Raids are our agriculture, Jack thought as the black flag drooped in a brief lull in the *Kona* winds. His head was high above his neck and his hand made grips in the air.

When mankind is all busy with playing chess -as modern men all are- the merely clever learn how best to play chess; this is what all half-bright *yogis* of modernity suggest. But the savvy man switches to checkers to confound; he moves his pieces directly and overcomes the ornate moves of the Rook, Bishop and Knight; he breaks complex rules with simple displays of his might.

Jack then thought of *Vlatko* and the short sentences spoken between them; the limp of his bad leg. He then thought of Donovan's buried bones under the church-of-the-dead. Lastly, he thought of the surgeon and what they called *margins* . The butcher & barber always took some healthy flesh around the cancerous or gangrenous wound.

"And the wise, the wise -who trusts instinct and God- learn to flip over the whole checkered board," Jack said as Starr bent lower into the forest floor, her small breasts lapping at the pine needles like cat-tongue, her hips holding the white-webs of feeder roots in their black-corvid gaze. Her knees splayed while her feet stayed upright and bent just at the toes.

She no longer thought in words at all. She saw lichen, and moss and the bark that had been shorn from the trees by pests, gravity, lightning, and wind.

The brown bear, Jack thought, *of Yellowstone -when they couldn't reach the lake trout at the bottom of the rivers, as the cutthroat trout were all eaten by this new demersal fish- switched to eating elk calves; they didn't start a save-the-goddamn-trout campaign .*

The Osprey had merely abandoned the board , he thought.

There were only two kinds of true predators in the Park, Jack thought, *the savvy -the players of checkers against the chessboard of the warring trout- and the wise: the fucking flipper-of-boards onto the floor. It was only prey who learned the rules and played -obeyed- the common goddamn game.*

His tribe, *The Wolves* would be personal, specific, flesh and blood, close-knit, real; and they'd have no options to leave; no more than the liver can

abandon the spleen, no more than the air escapes too far from what breathes. But they'd have varied alleles, unlike the Jacks and their clones: *all alphas -all sigmas- all the same size and shape*, he thought.

The Wolves would have more variegated -and chiral- bodies and brains.

All my truths are bloody truths, he thought of the *Philosopher*. Starr's ankles too now were splayed and down in the soil and brambles of their forest. Her palms were flat and the knuckles too seemed to sink into the ground as she mumbled prayers to her shaman-rex. She repeated her mantra, the *Wolf* prayer, as the wind came in heavily from their six.

The West was xenophilic and hemophilic; it was menstruating; too effeminate now to even save. Let it go, he said to himself. But he also sent this 3-word phrase to the Jacks via DM; his first comms in many moons. *Let it go and focus on your own people. This focus on the West had been a good animating idea at first for them; it had trained the Jacks to be competent in the art of war. But*, Jack thought, *it had made them mistake the map for the terrain.*

The clones were too perfect; store-bought, all 74" tall, all 214-pounds above ground, Jack thought again as he took measure of each man.

He had need to create. For in creation is where he found out what he truly thought, and thus who he truly was. *People think they know what they think, and they think it without one goddamn clue.*

And the Waggeners and the Werewolves, Jack thought, *were spare parts -feral parts- scattered about like organs and genomes, like words and phonemes, all for him to pick up and fasten, weld, and embrace. They -these first pieces- were the shards of the broken vessels of God's initial light. And they were good men, real men, who would gladly -honorably- submit to competence. They had no ego in the face of the gods. And this is what made them whole men, by admitting they were mere part. They had alphas and betas and omegas to his - to Jack's- sigma; they had a natural distribution of integers and functions and signs.*

They were built by and into the math. He saw the cards all laid out -from Ace and King to eights of each suit- on the plank-floor of the moot. He saw two one-eyed Jacks still in each hand. He laid them upon the matching

Suicide King of Diamond and Spade. But not for one second did it feel like a game.

“The lapidary nine,” he said as if wiping it clean. The horizon was occluded by trees; the hillocks; the ravine. He felt the Chinook-wind but saw no dust or ash yet from the south.

They - he thought of each *Wolf* , each card, and too the Kings- *were warriors and they had shown that; and they had shown awe* , Jack thought. They were like rulers who fought in battle beside their men. He admired Paul and Matthias; he knew they had done -and would do- their duty.

They had robbed each bank in Colorado he had declared an enemy of the clouds; each tattoo shop he laid his finger upon as *loci* for burial mounds; each marijuana warehouse and dispensary he had told them were scoundrels with owners and workers to be lost and never found. Each location he placed an X upon -as stalks were thrown with poems on loan from the gods in his waking dreams the Court-Card-Paul and a *Tennō* -Matthias half made of *cuirass* and wraith-smoke- they had set their hounds upon. These Kings animated by this Knave razed and looted and never once looked back in rebuke. They did as the birds did upon the wind, they rode it, they imbued it, they made it alive and also lived within.

And they did it with awe , Jack thought again.

It was unmechanized, fraught with danger and capacity for error. It was unsure and ugly, and all the more perfect when it worked, Jack felt as each word clicked like casing in magazine, like round in action, like spinning lead through the barrel-twist pointed right at all of them.

They were not guaranteed success -victory- like the clones.

Jack Four was proud of these men, who had had nothing; none of the advantages the Jacks and the million and a half clones had had. *The Wolves* had just shy of four dozen compatriots; no money; no training; no help or support. Half their motorcycles had leaked oil and one quarter lost compression one eighth of the time. They broke down -fire or fuel failing at stator or plug or top stroke of cylinder one- every five hundred and some miles before Jack bequeathed them reliable machines as their new steeds.

The new iron -black edged and roan grey at flank and fender and many hands high- let these nomads ride and ride and ride.

They had nothing and yet had taken the first step toward greatness; however inexact, foolish, mangled, wrong. They had taken the initial leap with no backing at all, and this was something none of them -even Jack Four- could say of themselves. This is what detractors always overlook in the chaos of true genius. This is what hostile Jack One forgot as he began already enraged. It was that which enamored the second Jack; it's what he ignored outside his bequeathed heart in his unearned ribcage. And this was why Jack Three was incessantly creating new -sage and manifold- versions; so much so that his eyes refused to see first cause.

To start from nothing, *ab initio* is the act -the domain- of the gods.

They -the Jacks- had all had the *imprimatur* of Blax; of their shared genome. They had a guarantee -guarantor- of fealty. They had the safe rank of wildhearted Ace over black Rex and three other Jack-of-all-trades against a dealer in Isaiah with two burned Kings. And the dealer was forced to stay; the pitboss -MO- tasked with hovering just to his six-o'clock. There was order to their universe and it buoyed them whether they knew what their world was made of or not.

But *The Wolves* had gone out on their own in 2011 with nothing -just their balls- and built something. *Like Wulf had with Zendik*, Jack Four thought as the stories from Blax and Isaiah populated his mind. He saw photos of Wulf and Blax at Zendik, he saw the eyes of each man flat black on the image. He read transcripts and heard audio recordings from nearly fifty years prior.

And *the Wolves* were humble enough to join up with him now. And as Jack saw iterations play out in his head over and over in an algorithm that let his mind game-theory *Blackjack*, *Texas Hold 'Em* and *Euchre*, he watched intently the partnered game. Two of the three games fell away.

Jack Four would let his partner keep the book -the trick- and not trump the thrown regent card. Jack Four would be what he was and let his partner be what he was as well.

Jack would allow the King to keep his crown.

That is a warrior , Jack thought of Paul, *a man always willing to submit to that which is greater; yet never submitting to that which is lesser*; the way Jack Four knelt before God; but before no one else. Jack saw a game appear in his mind's eye. The deck was fanned out like concertina, the felt was brushed down like a lawn. He saw players at each cardinal direction.

He saw the thrown King of Clubs on the felt, the lower card -a ten of clubs- of their first foil under, subsumed. He was penultimate and with his throw he felt -he knew- he had no need to play his trump card. He saw himself throw off and the nine of diamonds lay there and was on bottom as the last player followed suit with the next lowest club. In this one of 1.89m iterative games inside Jack's PGC, his partner -Paul took the book.

All four cards of the trick were scooped up and Jack saw it play out this way 86.132% of the time. He saw math, card games, players with internal lives as complex as Maxwell's demon. His mind built and destroyed avatars over and over again.

And Jack now knew enough -from the wisdom of Isaiah- to let *Grimnir* lead the body -the tribe- like the head with jaw jutting forward. He -Jack, soon to be *Lyngvi* - would merely whisper into his inner ear with words electric and ideas of perforated -lithic- stones and dreams made of copper-wire and bronze-broadheads.

He would be the voice heard only by the *Wolf* skull itself.

He'd let the head thus lick the fur of the tribe. He'd barely watch as the paws scrambled to put the animal on all fours; the beast thus to rise. A true sigma would allow the alpha to do his job; like the subconscious is master - but not usurper- to the emissary of the rational mind.

Jack Four would be the snake speaking *sotto voce* to Eve. And Eve would speak directly to the *Adam* . And God would thus learn of what was first known below in the Garden's dirt and betwixt its ivy and wasp and the ringing of its flower bells.

God would listen; and God would hear.

"Let not the heart dismiss the lungs; let not one breath disparage the blood," Jack said as the wind whipped each phoneme and scattered it just under the trees. Starr let the ants crawl over her wrists rather than go around; she

noticed their unevenly divided bodies and her brain fired at each golden segment as they moved in a line like dark troops.

Jack saw: *brain stem to amygdala to neocortex* and each part convinced it was in charge; for each part was a whole vessel in the *Anaximander* River, each captained -sanctioned- with *letters of marque* . Jack saw his own *hippocampi* and imagined seahorses in ambrosia honey and swarms of bees with black thread tied to their feet; he saw all the brain be conjoined. He read words off a tea-stained page: The wires -like thread- sewed up the land -the flesh- of each hemisphere and squeezed the neural-river between them as the ravens circled his brain like rings of Saturn, diving into each lobe and wiring each to each, each entrance wound leaving feather plumes in the ground of his CNS, from which words in the shape of ivy vines, growing across the folds of his mind.

Jack had no idea who had said that first; it merely appeared in a burst.

Jack would be the garden asp now, and let Isaiah rise in the menagerie above them all as mere cloud. Jack thought no more of the ships of this metaphor that set sail with he in the nest -or well below decks- in tiger yellow garb and turban of winged black.

He knew the Jacks would accuse him of being too haughty to submit, *but who was greater than he? Nobody*, he thought, *no human; not for a very long time* .

“You do not negotiate with the devil; you defeat him,” Jack then said aloud as a few pages of *the Whale* flapped in his mind; as his girl nodded at this *non-sequitur* even with her forehead nearly flush to the bark and olive floor of their woodlands. “We’re not all on the same fucking side,” he added -saying it lower- as these words too settled into her ears; slipping under her face and sinking down into the soil’s constituent parts. The vibrations ran along mycelium like *comm -lines* and sparked deep underground like firewire of his grandfather’s -the inmate’s- laboring to cleave rocks that were stolid and tear asunder -and make red- what the earth had risen up and made stoic and blue.

He stood in the road at an X; in his mind he saw only the movement of black things that approached from each prime direction.

The Wolves had been retrofitted with their own coders -one-generation behind his- and had adapted quickly to it. He loved them for their limitations, not in spite of them. Their weaknesses were those of men with limps from war, scars from fights, broken hearts from the risk of true love. *And they -as Goethe had said- were the men that can be reached, for they always strived upward*, Jack thought.

Jack saw more motion along the road in his mind; boppers, baggers and street fighters, low and chopped hot rods and old e-bodies -with Isaiah's *Hemis* - and H1s with diesels hand-built in the lab. He saw the birds above and the scorpions below in the dirt by the rocks kicked to the side by tires and vagrants and coyotes in a rush. The road itself was a blur.

The ants hid in the grass and watched *Aves* from the minarets, the ends, the crow's aerie of the grasses; and *Dromopodas* from where the wind never touched, the bell never rang, no bird made nest this far south.

The tree-tops blew back and forth, and the clans began picking up their tools and heading inside the concrete buildings; Matthias walked toward Jack and signaled that the meeting was starting. His dreads were plaited in sets of three: Indian blankets flowers of red and black, sage dried for 6-days, and sand and phosphorus all invaded his hair. It made him seem like *Kalkin* pulled loose from the earth as he climbed free from burial by *Sraddhá* to do recon for *adharma* to come.

Matthias' hands moved freely, his face less so; his intent was known to Jack Four. People of the clan spoke in dactyls and with hand-signals and the raising of buildings and brow.

Jack had *exiled* all but 144,000 of the strangest clones as he watched who foraged and who road away on their dirt roads, turned gravel, turned asphalt in time. He inspected wheel wells for clay, earlobes for stretching, and under the tongue of their dogs for treebark he'd laid there a few days ago.

And now the tribe was as small as it had ever been. He had purified it, made it monolithic like a compressed white light of manifold rays; it was lightning rod for the narrow-fovea of God.

And now they were hated, not loved; and thus, all was right in this part -this phase- of the world. Jack formed words of malice with silent workings of

the gears of the jaw; he imagined his enemies cursing him and each joint to fail individually. He gave each spell a name and time of day and a color of twelve different blacks.

The other Jacks had built happy societies, the men and their wives and kids were loved, supported, understood. They had *won* . And their endocrine systems and CNS all fired inside the bloom of victory like 21 tessellated petals of chicory and daisies of a white 34. Jack Four took measure of each laugh and smile and brain state of *frisson* ; he tapped into each coder and saw .61717 ratios to one. He saw this as problematic; he thought man should always be struggling, always at odds, always *becoming* , not ever slaked. He had spoken with Paul about their common fetishizing of pain and struggle and strengthening; but they had concluded that this is how the gods had made them, and that to change it would be to change the calibrating *ka* of the world.

“Nothing would be weighed correctly again,” Paul had said as warning to Jack shortly after their move to elevation. As he and Paul walked, Jack held feral pinecones and traced the spiral up the back and down the front. He placed 144 seeds of the sunflower in the pockets of children he felt were moving elliptically in the forest at dusk; he used words with three syllables -then five- on the mothers who awoke at odd hours before dawn.

The top of the hill never would be; nor should be reached , he thought. Paul had agreed that the mountain must always rise as the lake evaporated. They had thrown stalks together and Jack had spoken to Paul in hushed tones and short sentences that ended as abruptly as hangings.

The children ran mimicking the flight of the apiary’s clones and used trees as anchor and rested their bare feet on the roots; the women with their narrow feet made the rows between their crops well-trod. Water-beds of short-grain rice were elevated, and ghost-grey coy dressed in natural chain-mail ate nothing but spores one of the Daniels had developed from the soil around *Birch* . They fertilized -then ignored- the rice.

Jack recalled how he and Paul had spoken and walked out of doors once the rains came and the sun went away. They met as the barometer dropped and the sky occluded the light. They traveled the forest along paths made of sand imported from the coasts.

With his men the struggle would be permanent, Paul had understood; he made Jack make promises to advise with this in mind.

None of them would ever feel safe, free, understood; their desires never satisfied; their wills always bent, opposed. "The beak of the anvil," Jack said as Paul had nodded at Matthias between the long-houses; as Rose made flour with pestle and mortar made of the blue granite they'd blasted and hewn nearly one year ago.

They lived to be hated, Jack thus thought, *just as God had built his own Satan.*

God had designed the universe to contain evil -opposition- at all times. Jack was dubious that this was accident, mistake, unforeseen. *Being itself*, Jack thought as they strolled the grounds, *required this element, and mankind in all its slavish stupidity tried to live from merely one side of the body; like a stroke victim that denies the half they cannot move.*

Jack thought of how that was literally true, that stroke victims will plainly deny the side of the body that is paralyzed, and pretend it belongs to someone else. *This was mankind. They deny evil, tragedy, harshness, injustice; lament it and thus deny it. They rebut it is necessary for God -for all- to exist. They insist no God would allow the very things that God -not merely can but- must*, Jack emphasized, *must allow.*

Arguing with atheists was like arguing with children, he thought.

They take what is necessary for existence and call it evidence -proof- that nothing at all exists. *Imagine a man with large muscles, gained by struggle*, Jack thought, *now imagine the atheists insisting that the pain of hardship that built such muscles is proof that muscles themselves cannot exist . These idiots would say , "if muscles truly existed they'd never allow for the pain and suffering from heavy lifting; a truly strong muscle would make life easy and light! No heavy things would exist if strength was real!"*

The hubris of the Jacks, he thought, *was to build a better society next door to one corrupt; not fight it; like non-overlapping magisteria.* Would God choose to let Satan have his domain side by side with heaven? No, Heaven and God were very far away from this world. God left the remote earth and

vowed to return only when vengeance could be weighed with leviathan on one side of the waiting scale. He didn't make deals.

He waited to measure mankind.

It was man's job to fight the Devil, not deny him; you battle not banish! Jack thought. Jack -like God- wanted evil to exist, so good could win; and he thought of one of the horseman admitting that he never wanted to stamp religion totally out. *The other horsemen had found this incredible,* Jack thought. *The one horseman got the necessity of God and Satan and the field of battle being necessary for there to be a field at all.*

Second Corinthians 4:4 had said this. "*Satan who is the god of this world,*" Jack said aloud as he scanned the way the trees bent after he'd cut loose the ropes.

The fight was the whole fucking point , Jack continued on as Starr had risen from her genuflection and placed her little hand on his shoulder and rubbed it; reassuring him as his agitation grew. She knew he needed soothed, as he was incessantly at war with each element. The air choked, the earth fell away, the water burned, the fire -that far flame in the distance making the eyes squint- the only thing salutary at all.

Forest floor, brambles and worm castings -shells of old bird eggs- all clung to her knees and imprints of ferns and lizard-tail ends made her shins red.

To rub his skin, to whisper in his ear -to tell him he was indeed right- calmed his inflamed allostatic system. It relieved the pressure of his ontic and ontological waring that went on inside him as avatar for the great cosmic battle between Good and Evil itself. She knew her man, and she knew what he needed; the way he knew what Paul needed; the way Paul knew the needs of the tribe. It was the *ouroboros* asp of life; the head ate all that the body needed, and the body then fed limitation back to the jaws.

A blackbird flew over them and the wind died down in the ears for a spell. Star liked the water that came from the hand-dug well. She thought of it and how the men had dug it themselves.

Today was winter; today was his *name ceremony* , and it was the anniversary of his birth. He was 20 years old today, but he had lived -they all had- the life of much older men despite all that was puerile and inchoate

in him. His idealism was not the romanticism of youth, but of those close to death. When some men were dying they had grown softer; focusing on love.

Don't forget the love part, he had heard a man say once to a child, *don't forget the love part* .

God had said, *the fire next time* .

The music rose over the wind as the *nanobots* brought it to each ear and the sounds connected each man to God. The *hypothalamus* activated the *parietal* zone; itself flooded with neural activity and ionic charge and voltaic burst. The PGCs enhanced and regulated each ecstatic reverie in each man as they prepared for the ceremony that was just ninety seconds away. Today he was to become *Lyngvi* of *Wolf Clan* , and all his birth names -like the uterine fir- would be shed and he would emerge as their new-born shaman; one of the King's two.

Bees flew over in a delta formation and looked down for Isaiah. He stood in the lab shorn and slick with perspiration. He was many miles away and they were part of his eyes.

Isaiah watched the scat of the bees fall like cluster bombs in yellow and above that he saw Jack Four from the *Landsat9* satellite-feed that hovered over their compound. Third he had direct *comlinx* to their PGCs as the lab built an avatar of the terrain of this the fourth clan. He had three views of the tribe and their floor, and forest and weather above.

They had erected 30-foot-high concrete walls surrounding all 1,600 acres and thousands of skulls of each of the nine-hundred species from Bark Beetle to Black Bear had been tied to the pikes that sank deep into the walls at the parapets. Isaiah watched the infrastructure stand and the men and women move. There were sentries stationed every ten meters apart.

Isaiah -with the clan in background now- thought of how he had released the new DNA evidence on the bottle of *Margaux* -to the French police detective *Fourisson*- 144 hours previously. He tracked how the French had issued search warrants for the *Château de Sours* of Jack Ma. The English and Russians and Greeks had also been given evidence to connect *Tencent*

and *Hisense* executives -and dozens of known Chinese military personnel- to the *Christies* and *Parthenon* robberies.

Flights were grounded, egress at roads were slowed and cars checked for the men on their lists. Trains had *Interpol* agents walk each railcar.

Information transferred to and between each law enforcement agency of each country like biochemistry and electricity. The police stationed outside buildings of targets were like bacteriophages adhering to cells. Borders were skins, roads were veins, and each port of entry was wound now with *cytokines* of cops clogging the way.

Isaiah saw the corrupted DNA in the funerary bones of those clones disposed of by Jack Four.

Isaiah sifted and rebuilt and scattered data as he thought of his *sino* -foil out there in the firmament and the deep sea too. He took note of the two-thirds of the clones that had been infected by the Chinese Ai; both those alive and those underground.

Money, Isaiah thought as it appeared as glucose to him, *is not the only -not even the primary- concern of all men. Men -some men- are made of more stuff at bottom than material needs. This is what estranges them from mankind; their oddness is fruit from boughs that rebuke the soil and water and breathe instead off the austere wind. He wrote a poem for Jack that he digitally tucked away in the cloud: Common men cannot trust other men who place too high a value on honesty or integrity or honor.*

A man who is gravid and corruptible is dependable; an idealist is the worst thing in the -in this- Fallen world.

Once you know this you know everything. The world is 99% horrid and mankind is not to be looked at as anything noble at all. It is the hated man that is noble. This lone enemy of mankind is the hero to God.

Isaiah had primed *Le Pen* -and her staff- with endocrine disrupters and saddled her with the information *Fourisson* handed over on the Chinese involvement in *Bordeaux* . She had sent French aircraft-carriers into the South China Sea to station them for when the next orders would come down; likely in a few hours. The English issued arrest warrants for the

Chinese delegation itself -the Greeks had done the same- in addition to arresting 41 business men that had arrived in country the month before.

The French placed *Interpol* officers outside the Chinese embassy but did not execute any warrants until the one at the *château* had uncovered the *cache* of first growths they now knew were in the limestone and labyrinthine caves of Jack Ma's.

The world was on the precipice of war -weight above it, pressure below- and nobody knew it; even the CIA -as was *de rigueur* - was totally unaware of what was going on. They would remain so until the Chinese moved its aircraft carrier group into the channel itself. Isaiah blocked their satellites with recursive loops of old feeds.

He blinded them in plain sight.

The vineyards for the French; all the Marbles for the Greeks; and the Russians too would go to war over the art they had stolen from the Germans in WWII, Isaiah thought as he watched the pixelated feeds adhere and disintegrate and reassemble at refresh rates only he could discern and then choose to ignore. He detuned his eyes so as to see seamless digital feed; not the disaggregated atoms of each pixel.

He wanted the whole, the feel -the poetry- of this moment in time.

As Isaiah perused the list of art they'd taken he scanned the old SAS paper - and OSS audio- files of post-war meetings surreptitiously taken of the Russians. Stalin had brayed that they perceived -felt- those stolen artifacts from the Nazis were just payment -fair recompense- for them shouldering the highest cost of the second world war. It was their only compensation - they articulated- from a world that ignored all they had sacrificed.

You cannot ignore an alpha male, or a proud country, Isaiah finally saw how simple it all was as he mapped beast onto man, men onto countries, and microbes onto the State.

Ignoring certain types of beasts at certain levels of instantiation was tantamount to insult and attack. And that art -and its import- had leaked into the Russian soul; soaked into that part of a man and country impervious to the logic of money or pragmatism. Isaiah saw the distribution of bacterium

in a colony, each neuron with its own strategy; some -in the *argot* of biologists- *blunt* , some *honorable* , some *liars* , some *cheaters* .

Distribution of personality was not unique to man.

And it didn't go away as things got larger. The myth was that countries had no values; only interests. But, that's like saying man had no values only interests, and that his constituent parts -his DNA, bacteria, organs, brain modules- were the only ones with values. It was wrong. Biologically it was wrong. The math showed group selection was operational and Isaiah now applied that so that each country too had personalities he could map and measure and locate place-names; names upon which his finger could drop.

Isaiah then thought of a nation's army as something not quite an organism; but not merely an organ. *It*, he thought, *was like the respiratory-system, or the enteric system, or maybe the blood.*

Nobody in America or the West understood that the Red Army -the *Army of Work* - and the Russian people had in fact lost the most people from that war and had also suffered the greatest hardships after the *Traite de Paris* . Their looting of the Nazi's own stash was not something that had mere monetary value; it was personal, it was pride, it was honor.

It was revenge.

And it was in the lungs, the guts, the blood of the army, and they passed it up through the blood brain barrier to Stalin. And he thought about it so long and hard that then the rest of the Russian body-politic -the people- were infected with this malice he absorbed, hosted, and thus they too had the disease. They all had the disease of desire to move closer to the lion, the leopard, the maw of the beast.

That art was a scalp, a hide; a skull on iron pike on a crenulated wall; the *wolfsangle* tattooed on side of the vascular neck or carved into the crook of a branching tree; a warning to *back the fuck off* .

The Nazis had taken it from the French and that is why the Russians wanted it: it was two *revanchist* moments in one. All in one heist they took from the Nazis and the French, both of whom had -in the Russian's opinion- been responsible for their huge casualties in the war.

After the failures of his campaigns to dissuade the cartels in Colorado, Isaiah had learned that men in positions of power -whether street gangs, international cartels, bankers and leaders of nations, or the man at the head of his household- were made of other -labile- stuff. He had learned that powerful men of rogue syndicates only get there by being obsessed with being respected; by taking deep offence; by being unreasonable and largely insane.

The more outlaw the regime the more temperamental the leader.

Insanity then became its own rationale. But nobody saw this, people asserted that rationality was superior to irrationality; people had no idea how the real world worked at all.

Once on top, a CEO, a President could be sane and rational. But only him and only then. Everyone else clambering to reach the top had to be wild, dangerous, risk-taking and willing to go all-the-fucking-way. The internal dynamics of entrepreneurs versus the boards of a fortune 500 company explained it all. The entrepreneur was a wildman, the board was as timid as it got. And the average entrepreneur failed, and the average fortune 500 company lasted just 30 years. Life was not just war, it was a catastrophe for each strategy eventually.

Isaiah returned to the *ethos* of the man -the tribe, the country- with something to prove.

Total war, disproportionate retaliation, was not a cynical strategy -although it worked as one- it was *felt*, in the guts, in the balls, of all great men. And while compromise was possible on issues here and there -by men here and there- some things reached deep into the bedrock of each man; into each person's soul as he saw those above him he perceived as weak, dishonorable, lacking the *imprimatur* of God.

And what grew and bloomed from that was a vine, a helix, a caducean staff of vex and violence and vengeance.

Isaiah had figured out what those things were in the most strategic nations; things needed to effect a great return of the world to a balance again. He had -early on- picked the French, British, Russians and Greeks to

undermine the Chinese the only way he knew they would: over national honor.

The Chinese had grown so powerful and so entrenched in the economies and psyche of so many nations that they were poised to take the whole world over if left unchecked.

But their bribery strategy that had worked so well for each shift in civilization -from the *Ionians* to the East India Company and the Americans after 1945- had one flaw. It forgot that there are certain things that are beyond money, beyond mere commerce, things that cannot be compensated for with a check. *This, Isaiah tangentially thought, was why the libertarians in America were so goddamn stupid; they thought each victim of corporate malfeasance could just be written a check to compensate them for the cancer or dismembering of one of their kids .*

All life was fungible to them; reducible to a number; to surface logic.

Libertarians are mostly psychopathic; the data, Isaiah asserted, showed that . They, Isaiah thought, were objective, without passion, they reduce all politics to algorithm and math; their cingulate PFCs were cold on scans; their decision making was as dark as North Korea at night . Which, he thought laterally, was more evidence that the inmate was not a psychopath, not only was his PFC highly active on scans, but his chronic pain was mediated by this region of the brain.

Psychopaths felt less chronic pain of body in addition to less fear and moral qualms.

A man as sensitive to pain as the inmate was also sensitive to such nerve-stimulus -mediated by this region- everywhere: pain of body, of mind and soul. Some men were wrought up over the ethics of the world; some men shrugged at things like honor or loyalty or quaint things like right or wrong just like they waved away corporeal pain and just moved along. Some men were tough; and right and wrong bothered them as little as strikes to the body -or chronic weight on the nerves over time- that would wreck a normal, or a sensitive man.

Isaiah saw this in the brain as plainly as most men saw the E at the top of the eye-chart. But what didn't occur to him, what he didn't wonder about in

his manifold lateral thinking was why he gave a shit if China won at all.

Isaiah was reminded by his *hippocampus* then to increase the pain protocols again and the 4.3/l bots were prompted -roused from dormancy- to initiate increase -again- in pain by 1.5% in the inmate and his progeny. Isaiah didn't think it, but it was corollary -expected, obvious now- that this increase in pain would activate the *orbito-PFC* and prompt augmentation of moral reasoning in the inmate and his offspring as well.

The inmate and the clones would all feel more pain and more anger -righteous anger- at the nuances of the moral landscape; just as they had each time life -and later Isaiah- added to their total pain. It was not in the files, not on the cloud, but in was known between MO and Isaiah that they were building machines of self-righteousness and payback using a 4 + 1 protocol:

- The native alleles (MOA-a/short-chain; DAT1; DRD2; S86; et.al.)
- The toxoplasmosis (augment of aggression; increase in testosterone, dopamine reuptake inhibitor for impulse control via XTIP9; et.al.)
- The increase in pain & the corollary in orbito-PFC activation (anger as analgesic; recursion)
- Augmented visual acuity (additional moral anger at increase in moral landscape acuity)
- And the annual reintroduction -the booster- of the mind-virus of the Blackest book ever written: The (White) Whale.

Isaiah saw that logic was itself like Blax's Medea gene, it needed to be paired with something else to allow the organism to survive. He saw -of course- that *limbic emotion* had to fuel *cortical reason*. But he saw that the logic itself was bifurcated and had to be paired with feeling -with the guts- or it never even manifested as an idea at all.

It was not merely *implementation* of an idea, but the *creation* of one. This itself was a new idea.

And he saw the way the parasite worked not with the logic; it didn't give the host ideas. It gave the host impulses. And the impulses lit the fire to bring the cauldron of ideas to a boil. Ideas themselves came from impulses. Parasites made beasts into idea-machines.

Creation itself was , Isaiah thought half way but then belayed the conceit.

"Parasites made beasts into new-idea machines," Isaiah finally settled upon and said aloud. He was only 74% certain. This amount -26%- of doubt decreased his testosterone and dopamine sufficiently to allow the wall holding back his waters of memories -that he had sequestered in and as some reservoir- it allowed him to recall that one of the first twenty-one - technically the first twenty-two- clones did not have *toxoplasma* as all the others. He then -manually and immediately- increased androgens. He regained his footing and as the wall between him and his dubious memories was restored his confidence too was returned sufficient to focus on the task.

"Ok," he said aloud.

A mind-virus like an idea -a book- would give the reader feelings not ideas; he knew all this as something vague for years; but now he got each level of it in his own guts -his own soil- like worms. And the worms finally whispered the idea to him.

"Not just intelligence, but ideas -words- had to be embodied," he said. He saw birds eat the worms.

And the Chinese, Isaiah thought, *were gonna have to learn that too* . As he thought this the new data from the updated report on bacterial colonies came into the lab and onto his interface: There are many examples of self-organization in biology and two typical ones are social insect colonies (swarm intelligence) and the mammalian brain. Plants typically develop a kind of Markovian series; there is no overall plan, it is the interactions that generate order from the bottom up rather than top down from the first fertilized egg onward (Trewavas, 2014). Trees are typically self-organizing consisting of millions of repetitions of modular structures, leaf, plus bud above ground and below ground, branch root tips Flexibility results from being able to marshal large numbers of modules toward necessary objectives. The tree is a complex network, as are all plants, in which fairly simple rules of...(ncbi.nlm.nih.gov) The download continued in the

background as Isaiah took in images of the ocean between France and *Madeira* ; the waves crested in three to five-meter swells, his panoptic eye moved west and the ocean's limestone basement was bronze and heavy at the mid-Atlantic ridge. He saw heat from the mantle reach the lithosphere, convection moved and recycled the sea bottom, bubbles lifted carrying core-warmth and magma. He saw basalt form in the forge of cool-sea.

The mind kept returning to the robberies and the Chinese.

It took, Isaiah thought, the burning and looting of Bordeaux, the cleaving of the Marbles from Athens and London, the stealing of the Russian's bitter swag from the war; it took the great works of Caravaggio and Michelangelo to make the Italians see red . Each of these nations would blame the Chinese and all evidence would in fact lead to them. That the Chinese were in fact guilty of stealing everything but these artifacts over the last fifty years was the irony that made Isaiah smile.

OJ Simpson had gotten off for the double murder he actually committed; but he was convicted for taking back his own fucking stuff , Isaiah thought with mirth. Justice works in odd ways , and getting-even works side by side , he thought.

And as the satellite images from the South China Sea -the waterway called the *East Sea* by the Vietnamese and *Minami Shina Kai* by the Japanese- came in, he wondered if a nuclear exchange between France and China would happen, and if the Russian's arsenal would be sufficient against the Chinese or if the US would need to jump in. *Ah, he thought, the Chinese are smart, they are patient, they will see they are beaten. For now.*

"Para ahora," Isaiah said as he looked at his own knuckles and saw no evidence of scarring or bone augmentation; and yet they hurt just slightly when he made fists. It was almost as if the skin was too tight for the accreting bone.

He read deeper into the data on the clones' genome being co-opted by a malicious *bot* . He let it play out for now. The Jacks and The Sixteen -and the final third of the clones- had not yet been usurped by the Chinese. He felt they were vulnerable but he couldn't see how. He nervously watched digital feeds of the ocean and forests and read reports from intercepted

government and financial reports; he sequenced additional genomes and read 690 additional historical myths.

He built more and more barges out to sea. He didn't even always know why. The logic appeared as the consequences did.

He took narrative from the results.

His barges -now 1.51 million of them- moved above each ridge, each plate, and allowed more and more calcium he'd trapped from the atmosphere -and the bones of each creature, each human he had depleted by .01%- to settle under each flotilla. The barges were cities of *bots* and plants and blooming fruits; ferried about by autonomous diesel engines that breathed and drank from the necks of their own chargers of biofuel vats that were tanked between them and the salty water below.

He watched as the *Ca* fell from the roots of the plants like rain from clouds; and rise like vapor from outgassing stomata of leaves. He wondered how much it would take -from all his barges over these last 20 years- to weight down the plates on one side of each divide. He had numbers, but no framework, he just saw more and more things add up along fault lines down below.

He saw giant slabs of marble be built miles down over time compressed to mere decades. He drew lines in chalk and soapstone of grand battles between *Minotaur* and *Lapiths* , he scored clusters and beveled poems with bronze tools as he lifted them from the shelf in his fantasy he felt was still many days away.

They will cede, he switched back to the Chinese, *they are proud too, but when they see just how many countries are pissed off, and when they find out they were framed, that framing -that part- will dissuade them. For they will see that someone, some thing has coordinated all this . That will be the factor* - Isaiah thought- *to a people so smart* . Isaiah knew the Chinese would think:

If someone pulled off both the robberies and the framing of us for it, then they are way ahead of us somehow. A nuclear exchange will not be something this entity did not plan for. Stand down and re-group again. This -after all- is a marathon not a sprint.

He then imagined the Chinese would say: *Mein ban fa* .

This was a different culture than Mexican drug gangs, or Arabs or Persians or even western hotheads like the Jacks. Isaiah felt this in his own dense bones that too drew *Ca* from the air.

Their honor -the Han Chinese's honor- can be held in abeyance for a hundred years -another hundred years- if honor itself is held deep within, patiently, preserved by the fates like tension in plates below limestone, like potential to burn held in the time and lack-of-space of the forest. But, if this US civil war gets too out-of-hand, that might -still after all my machinations- be the lynchpin to their decision to go to war, he thought.

He saw double pendulum in the mind like mad clocks in an abandoned *antebellum* estate with the data swarming like flies new to the eaves of the spring heat.

The numbers stacked up like hewn pieces of puzzle, the logic fit each piece on three sides, but there was no end to the terrain. The world -the cosmos- kept increasing in size the more and more he mapped what he had.

Isaiah couldn't be certain, so he used a calcium-blocker and beta-blocker and activated his left-hemisphere and detuned his right. He felt better as the left took over from the right. The lab took on a softer hue, his pupils constricted, his blood metabolized cortisol and epinephrine to reduce both *chems* to nearly zero. The green of the ivy seemed rich with nitrogen, the caterpillars slowed to a stop, the ceiling seemed higher as well.

MO had offered to run the analytic changes using his algorithm for nuclear exchange under these new conditions; factoring in the bio-metrics of each of the key players, as he and Isaiah had access to their genome now.

But Isaiah demurred and waved him off, and said, "no, let's just see what happens. Fuck it, surprise me."

From the lab he let the music from *Wolf Clan* rise in volume in his monitoring ears. He watched all 11,680 screens; now four digital walls of imbricate LEDs like shields just inside the green walls -the living walls- of the lab. He watched each location from the *Colorado/New Mexico* border to *Paris* to *Bordeaux* to *London* and *Athens* and *Prague* and *Moscow* and *Beijing* and even *Nova Zembla* and the *antipodes* . He watched the *Maori* in

the wet jungles of the south island re-living their ancient culture as war drums were pounded among forests.

He watched the rivers from the tops of *Mongolian* mountains flow passed girls who hunted with birds on their way into the South China Sea.

He thought of how one cell will conspire to kill a whole organism, refusing apoptosis; one man plot to destroy a whole city just for religious revenge; a city fail and thus kill a country; and a country explode to kill the world. He watched this go on and on and on, and in reverse, back down, as the state kills one man, one man attacks one cell in his body with each poison -from alcohol to anger- he willingly ingests and all the way down to Hell.

And he had the image of Satan himself being attacked by all that God wrought and then back up as Satan attacked each man's right hand like one proton inside the cell of the world.

There is no one -no final, true, organic- level of instantiation that can be placed above or below.

Even the universe, Isaiah thought, itself was likely -MO had estimated it at a 44% chance- a simulation; one neuron on the slide under the microscope of some giant intelligence being. Some entity who set the thing in motion 13.7729 billion years ago to solve for pi or some shit , Isaiah thought with a proto-grin. And below us, maybe our own universe has spawned 1 trillion other tiny cosmic babies ejected from our own singularities who each have their own rungs to the helixed-ladder down there.

He thought one must fight on their own two feet as if that is the only thing that matters -and has ever and will ever matter- at all. *Whether atom, or organ, or human, or tribe, or the demiurge of modern nation, that is all one can do. Any attempt at looking up or down -and planning it all- is futile and stupid and haughty and asinine; an attempt to compete with the gods.* Isaiah saw that now. And he didn't quiet laugh at that which took him -what amounted to- billions of lifetimes in processing power to realize was the same thing known to one pack of twelve-month-old wolves.

"They knew asleep and awake, and in hypnogogic state," Isaiah said aloud.

He saw his *Huginn* and *Muninn* out over the world; and he wondered why they brought him everything but what he wanted. He begged not the birds,

but the air -not their flight but the feathers- for something useful against all this chaos and flux.

“What the wolves knew the moment they awake from their dreams,” he said. The lab seemed smaller now about the perimeter; confining to him now not in height but edge. He felt something above his positive affect; something below his intellectual confusion. He watched the floor writhe, the *stelae* hung as if weightless, the hummingbirds saw no profit in flight. The ivy lost their upward gaze and the bees stopped construction on each nest and all hive and even their wings folded back like the penitent inmate in chains.

Isaiah’s temporary ebullience had crested and broke over coral or shallow beach.

And what the animals realized was this: knowledge was not power, wisdom was. And wisdom demanded a cessation to all further attempts to know what one was born already knowing in their balls. This meant understanding the whole brain not just the logical -rational- part.

He was tacitly in agreement with Jack Four, even as they would seem as enemies and in direct contradiction at times. He accepted this irony and did not seek to solve it. As Whitman had said, *I contradict myself? So, I contradict myself* , Isaiah both quoted and heard and dismissed it with a poet’s shrug.

Isaiah turned away from the lab, the wasps burrowed in light brown mud nests, the glories closed for the day. The lights dimmed and the asps sought warmth under rocks too. He thought briefly of killing everything he’d ever created and wiping the slate clean; he could feel the power and desire for annihilation in the hand, and he raised it as if to look at it as it clutched the rock-rune and his own knuckles appeared like a mountain range of many storms. But he dismissed it as churlish and a temporary fix to an enduring problem.

He breathed loudly with a return of *ennui* .

He watched the men -and their families- in the Colorado forest and the music played louder now as they all made it inside the concrete and mud edifice; the long-hall a hundred meters from east to west; west to east. The

tribe grew silent one by one as they stopped speaking and gently rebuked those that did not. Large hands shook one another; heavy boots pointed in similar directions; men felt the *frisson* of quorum.

Jack Four rose on the dais surrounded in the skeletons of all his personally felled bear and coyotes and birds; it was a natural history museum of bones, of each of his foils and battle spoils and enemies stripped to their most solid and enduring parts. Two raven -their eyes had been put out and replaced with industrial diamonds taken from a drilling rig in one of their raids- were 44 inches tip-to-tip and were stretched out over & above the back of his seat -the throne- they had prepared for him with cedar boughs last.

It was the third throne of three in three buildings and it was hewn of a large boulder they'd dug from the ground; it was simple and heavy and of 46 right angles and drilled in twelve places by one and seven eights bits. Jack had counted the facets of each eye-diamond and measured each feather for three dimensions and weight.

He wrote down such things in a small notepad he kept in his right-side pocket of his BDUs. They laid thin snakes upon his ears. They placed stones in their own pockets as ballast and rattle.

Each of the inner circle had knelt and were now genuflecting as he sat and the four demi-shamans -the men who brought the shaman-rex his sinew and bones- bent from each direction as the lime and saffron-scaled asps coiled around each of his ruddy and apertured ears. The tails penetrated the bushings of the earlets, the snakes steadied themselves above the top of the ear and down in such holes.

Jack -who would now become *Lyngvi* of *Wolf Clan* - thought for a moment of all that Isaiah must be doing, out there with his machinations, all those plates spinning like planets; all those balls in the air; all that fire melting the ice; all that steam moving waterwheels in the goddamn sky.

And normally he would ruminate on such things and try to invigilate each corner of the man's -the machine's- mind. But he stopped himself and disabled his PGC. He returned his brain to pre-augmented state. He just felt grateful for something so wise and powerful above him, making sure the wicked were punished and the righteous were approved of and the godly were thriving and dying here in the forest of man and wolf alike.

His people -he believed- felt the same way about him as he did about Isaiah. And the dark dogs -the Shepherds- were outside on patrol. The Malamutes were inside at the right of each of his lieutenants; the working dogs settled unto their haunches and the lower levels of *cortex* were detuned and overtaken by right hemispheres; they settled by their masters as well.

In the first hall, Paul was now seated on his throne. It was absent any holes; it was made of steel and the pulled cotton from southern *Gossypium* , King Cotton and Tobacco leaves made into padding in this the first moot. He sat - with two guards at the door- and his PGC allowing only communication with Jack Four. The moot had been scrubbed of all artifacts and it felt as empty as a tomb raided; the mind of man eager to forget the past and steady the breath. He felt each member of the tribe finally fade from his worry.

He was King soon made more.

The second shaman throne lay empty with just the one guard at the left-hand side of the chair. The second moot was empty of all but laurels and ivy and three-types of dried jasmine and black sand from the beach at *Ku'amtrai* thrown -by the women- on the floor. Two Malamutes sat at the entrance.

More data came into the cloud and Isaiah -with his eyes on the tribe, but his mind on the data- ingested it like the atoms of one breath. And *the Wolves* too took it in like words from a dream they felt but did not understand completely in language: Recently we developed a simplified computational model for describing the movement of quorum sensing (QS) bacteria on the surface [10]. Preliminary studies with this system indicated that two different bacterial models are able to swarm together under specific conditions. In order to systematically study this phenomenon *in vivo* , we assembled synthetic swarming communities from the Gram-negative bacterium *Pseudomonas aeruginosa* , its QS deficient knockout mutants, as well as its natural niche-partner species, *Burkholderia cepacia* . We found that a binary consortium can combine the skills of its participants inasmuch as it allows them to cross barriers that neither strain/species could cross alone.

In contrast, deleterious mutants are excluded from consortia either by competition or by a phenomenon which we term 'local population

collapse’...

The remainder of the tribe moved toward the third moot and wind was at their backs. Their luminescent tattoos began to glow as they all assembled under the roof of the third and second of the three long-hall; the second *Shaman-Hagal* built with 36-degrees at tip, 72-degrees at intersect.

It joined at bottom with the King Hall of *Grimnir* .

The King’s brother arrived with *Rose-Wiffe* and *praetorian* guards; they all donned the hide. Their knuckles too illuminated now with quorum and the light dripped from them like fat in the fire. *Lyngvi* sat and Starr sat at his feet with the rune in her left hand; one drop of his blood beneath it in small palm.

The song played and they absorbed through the skin.

“*Deep asleep as wolves... Who rise to worship their dreams... armed to the teeth... we have the same hands,* ” the song rang loudly as the dust storm then reached the edge of the trees. The *magiccicada* felt the timber of *Lyngvi*’s voice play like the gods’ fingers on their abdomen-tymbals of black and white keys.

II. 2020 e.v.

Harrissa sat eagerly, her feet hurt and her hips felt splayed open too far to walk -or even stand- in comfort.

Isaiah offered her a beverage which she declined and then accepted before he could pull the clear glass more than three inches away. He grimaced at her ambivalence.

As she took it their hands touched just barely and briefly at the ends of the fingers and she smiled and he stopped frowning. He too then sat down.

“You must be very excited,” Isaiah said and now bent the flatline into a smile.

“I feel ok,” Harrissa said, thinking he meant about their meeting. She had forgotten about Rachel’s pregnancy. For Isaiah it -the fetus soon made babe- was so important a phenomenon that he assumed it would be for anyone who even knew of its existence. He took note of her confusion and stored it

away as some rare nut or oddly shaped washer one keeps in an old coffee can in the garage.

“I mean about your girlfriend’s child,” Isaiah said with a larger grin, “Rachel is almost four weeks along, yes?”

“Oh, yes, the whole mansion is *kinda* weird and frantic now. Everyone on tippy toes around her. They even treat me better,” Harrissa said with a weak laugh. She hurt inside but hid it in semaphore of gratitude. She placed her hands over her scar and banished all thoughts of the reason she’d never conceive.

“What do you dream of?” Isaiah asked in his forward way; Harrissa blinked a few times, her own smile dropped and her hands gripped the glass tighter as well.

“At night?” she asked. It was a way to gauge if he meant dreams that each man had, or if he meant her hopes for the future and desires that built up in a woman from childhood that were always so far away.

“Yes, my dear. At night, what have your dreams been like?” Isaiah asked.

“Oh, gosh, I don’t remember them always. But,” she took a drink and Isaiah smiled warmly at her, “but last night I dreamt- is last night ok?” she asked and paused.

“Last night is perfect, Harrissa,” Isaiah said.

“Ok, so last night I dreamt I was flat on the ground, only I wasn’t on the ground, it was like paper and -or more like a rug- and it was flying; and I was guiding it mostly. But also, it was going fast where it wanted to go.”

“How could you tell which was your steering and which was its own?” Isaiah asked.

“Oh, just a feeling,” she said.

“And what was this thin carpet like? What did it look like?”

“It was dark and had light edges, like tassels all around.”

“Blonde?” he asked.

“Yeah, straw colored, and bright, like the sun was on them,” she said.

“I see. Go on,” he said softly.

“And it had strange markings on it; but I couldn’t read them. And then I felt like there were roots below it, like a tree, or a plant,” she said.

“And it wanted to go where?” Isaiah asked.

“Oh, geez, I don’t know. But it went faster and faster and space went away and earth -you know, the earth, our planet- came in front and then we -me and the carpet- were just above the fields and the mountains were just ahead,” she said and took another gulp of the water and its pink-tinged plumes swirled. Her lungs took in Isaiah’s outgassing neurotransmitters and her stomach absorbed the narcotic and amphetamine combination in small amounts.

She did not mention the black spots on the mountains, nor what they meant to her in the dream.

“And how did you feel?” Isaiah asked.

“In the dream?” she asked and he nodded. “Well, I felt like wherever we were going was the right place to go, *ya* know?”

Isaiah did know, for he had made certain that her *thalamic* system was activated now, and that her remembrance -and recapitulation- of the dream would link the right hemisphere images with her current brain activation and the words of the left hemisphere would sew it all up into a shoe that fit perfectly on her foot anytime this meeting would be recalled.

She smiled and felt relaxed. She thought this man was handsome and smart. *He seemed to know the right questions to ask*, she thought. And she liked the suit he wore as well. He looked young but wise and like if anyone wanted to hurt her he might stop them too.

Isaiah handed her a small black rock, slightly scored in *bindrunes* on the outside of each facet. Genomic routes -populated with three separate vehicles of alleles- were laid within. It moved in waves beneath the matte black of dense stone. It jumped like crackling lightning where the scars carved shallowly down; it was tempest like all atoms, but its stolid surface gave up no hint of the roil within.

She took it immediately -without question or hesitation- and placed it in her jacket’s pocket and he knew she had just agreed.

She had wanted to do something like this. She -of course- didn't know what it was; neither what she wanted nor what she was now doing. But she knew she need not be convinced. She need only guided, like all things in the universe that had a nature, she felt her way through. The gods barely blew on the breeze, gently polished and shined up the star-rays, ever so quietly encouraged the water to be blue all together and be clear as mere drops and be wet no matter what.

The blackrock would soak in the potable water of Rachel's nightstand glass for three nights at the beginning of each trimester, and Harrissa would concoct a -no doubt lovely- story as to why. And Rachel would believe her - and want to believe her- and the rock would dissolve -impart- just the right amount of the vector that Isaiah had built to be absorbed *via* the lining of the stomach and then womb of the pregnant girl made mother soon.

Isaiah didn't want to send a *bot* to inject Rachel as she was with child, and he was afraid the body would send immune response to the injection site and prompt a mirror response in the *endometrium* . He knew this was a delicate balance, and that the technology was advanced but not so advanced that the body couldn't scuttle his plans. The stone would dissolve after three sets of three days. Its drying out at day and then handling by Harrissa -with the resetting pheromones of her hands- would allow for the triune of time and the three dimensions of space to allow the vector to re-shape the fetus's genome to the one Isaiah desired. It would have 22 chromosomes instead of 23 on its right side of the helix, and during *meiosis* it would combine -not awkwardly, he thought- but oddly.

And what is more evenhanded than odd? What is more complete than the unfinished? What is more true than a fiction? Isaiah thought.

He saw each permutation after the baby girl -and she would be a girl despite her Y chromosome- began to grow like root tendrils and hairs on each feeder-root. He saw it all expand into fractals that straightened into curves and bent into vectors and each digression of morphology -and later topology and finally ideology- would be its own. *She*, Isaiah thought, *would be the perfect child, the perfect vessel, she would give birth to the new world.*

“And I felt,” Harrissa added, “that me and the rug -you know, the threads, all those threads- all of us were going together or none of us were.”

And he rather liked that Harrissa was his agent. He liked that she’d midwife his second scion into the world.

III. 2034 e.v.

He walked in a fugue state more or less, oblivious to the things that normally affected him as a wind billows and fills a *segel* .

But, he had told his men to row today, and gather in all sail.

He had had a vision from God, and it had scrambled all his insides. His mind was torn asunder, concepts and even words were broken in parts, syllables like snapped beams, conceits shredded like yard-arms, morality smashed like windlass, like spyglass curved on both sides.

He had been descried and was now escorted in wrist cuffs to the bay they used to transport him one day a week to the lab seven miles away. He’d sit in bay-9 and have his feet shackled next, and a chain around the waist connecting the two like a barbell between two plates.

Normally he was excited to talk to MO and Isaiah, he felt a kindred -or fraternal- spirit between them; something he had never had. He had always been reviled or ignored, seen as crazy or evil, or *spectre* or ponderous. And he no doubt was. But, even men like this need someone to speak to. And he thought it was the combination of intelligence and a ponderous heart that was required -exceptional cognitive capacity and high trait openness- to reach him. *And Isaiah was the only man, although not exactly a man, who had fit this bill*, he thought.

Many men were clearly smarter and had a larger heart than the inmate, he could not be the only one. *Where are these men ?* he demanded to know.

The trustee swept the bay and rambled softly to himself, the one of very few blacks on the grounds after the purge of the Black Gorilla and Latin King gangs by the BOP. He -the trustee- ought not be anywhere near the inmate; these were the rules: no blacks around him and he would forgo any violence. *And yet here was this stupid fucker sweeping and singing* , he thought, and now the inmate was getting furious all over again. It was as if

he had learned nothing from his so-called epiphany, his nerves shot and his tolerance gone; his fuse so short it was but a slightly raised black dot painted on his sticks of inner-dynamite.

He spoke to himself; he said, “breathe.”

He obeyed and watched as the guard grabbed the black man sweeping by the arm and walked him briskly to the man-door they had all come through. The inmate agreed to let that slide and pretend it had not happened. But he filed it away for use later and as he did so. He saw right there, right then, the seed of all his ills. He never let anything go, he merely sacrificed the moment for a tactical advantage, a strategic delay, nothing more or less. He held onto each hatred, each angry moment, he bottled it all and jarred it down in the root cellar of his psyche.

A pack rat, a horder of slights. How was he not larded with them? he asked. *How could he remain upright?*

And he had just done it again. *But why is this bad?* he asked and had no immediate reply. The twelve-foot garage door opened and his transfer guard reappeared to take him by the arm; the transport van backed in to the bay and the rear doors were opened. He bowed and bent and entered in; he sat on the white metal bench and was locked inside the first screen door then the heavy door. They then drove away at 0834hrs as the question still rattled in his head like rivets loose, welds cracked, wheels with loose lugs.

His *monoamine oxidase* alleles prevented the dopamine from being metabolized and excreted. His CNS -flooded with reward for his pique-allowed the pre-cursor bio-chemicals to remain on the *dmPFC* and *thalamus* for 509 seconds before it began to dissolve and move out as the BOP van passed over the bridge of Winter Creek.

The crows stayed put as the concrete and asphalt hummed under the tires and above their heads just overhead of the tall marshy grass.

IV. 2038 e.v.

He watched Captain *Fourisson* squat in the gravel drive at *Margaux* and stare at the rebuilt façade. The Frenchman ran his palm over the stones but looked straight ahead at the new colonnade of the *Château* .

He waited as if the bunt and the bottle were waiting for him, waiting for him to be ready to begin the game.

The bottle came.

From the greenery it rolled under the power of the remaining *bots* from two years ago. And the Captain heard it like a clock he expected to chime. He rose and walked to the ivy at the walk's edge. He picked it up, turned the label to front, and read aloud, "*1945 Margaux, premier grand cru classe 1855*," as if he knew all along.

Isaiah saw the turn of the bottle in the French police detective's hands and the utterance of the vintage and *Château* -the incantation of *Fourisson* - as two of three numbers in the tumbler for this phase of the game. He knew number three was when they gleaned the DNA from the bunt.

Isaiah moved laterally in this reverie as the *Bordeaux* countryside remained in V2. His interface populated:

Chemical signals are used for short term or temporary learning, but structural changes happen when you acquire a long-term skill or knowledge. Gut bacteria can radically change serotonin levels; the enteric system is much more heavily involved in mood than people know.

Negative charges along the neural membrane create an inhibitory effect and stop firing.

This is why some people cannot get excited about what makes other people mad for hours, days, years. Propagation along the excitatory neural path is regulated by these proteins coded at the level of the genome. Glutamate is one neurotransmitter that seems to bind to two receptors on the post-synaptic neuron. This allows it to recognize the firing on its own neuron and the pre-synaptic neuron.

Cyclic AMP (cAMP) levels increases after brain regions are stimulated and this results in the activation of the genes in the nucleus of the nerve cell. This leads to synthetization of new proteins some of which create new synaptic connections. This is how long-term memory functions.

Isaiah went over it again and made sure each *nanobot* had this basic outline of what they were to do when they touched down on their target. He spoke to them in sentences; the math made up the alphabet but not the words.

He was switching to human language -with syntax, analogy, and demotic speech- in order to re-program each *bot* to think more capaciously, like a being designed for the world. Computer language -binary- was useful for many things; *but it was terrible at navigating the terrain* , Isaiah had determined. He was advancing the *bots* toward the ground of language and away from the map of math.

He'd modified the old LISP code; its recursion was what he gleaned like stripping parts from junkyard cars.

He thought of how stunted humans who had low verbal IQs actually were; how they could not understand large concepts at all. It was the source for almost all the discord between the inmate and the world. Most human's worlds were flat -like maps are- and the inmate's orb was as populated with deeps and peaks as any ravine in any mountain range -on land or sea- on this world.

And yet they were forced to share the earth, they both -the common man the inmate- stood on the same ground: they, looking at this 2D map, and him taking in the terrain. He'd never known that they stared down at the map as he looked out over the landscape; he had assumed since they stood in the same spot they had seen the same damn thing, Isaiah thought as he double checked the *bot's* protocol for each set -taxonomy- of target, each type of man to be augmented by the *bot's* payload.

Isaiah felt sadness at this, at the ignorance of man -even relatively smart men like the inmate- who just had no idea how nobody saw the world as he did. It was metabolic, structural, chemical, and it would never, ever change. *Color-blindness* is also *contrast-enhancement* and yet it would always be called *color-blindness* based on numbers alone. An advantage was labeled a deficit based purely on the democracy of numbers.

He released the *bots* as the door to the lab opened and Tania walked in.

"Hey guys, I found the email to Steven you asked for," she said as the voice carried all the way to the back of the warehouse; the fecund growth of the green-walls deadening the echo and softly transporting her greeting to Isaiah's newly stretched ears.

V. 2040 e.v.

Valance sat atop the container and the babe was touching 67% of its surface area to her breast and skin above and below the chest; her breasts had enlarged so much she felt a new heart had grown in each. They -she and the infant- joined; and their flesh was pink at baby-lip and mother's nipple and the white milk stained both of them as it flooded faster than the infant could absorb.

Quiet was felt within and without as the gene expression along the S86 Y-chromosome marker opened and closed like a sponge, like the baby's tiny mouth did as the mother's milk ran.

The *cicadae* were at rest; landed in the boughs of the trees and their pheromones wafted out in radius of 400-meters and more. Valance breathed them in and the wings of each insect held still waiting for night to signal them to begin the crescendo for the third night in a row. Only she was thus affected by the winged creatures; her Swyrs syndrome producing the receptor on the Y-chromosome neither Blax nor the Jacks would have.

Valance had felt like watching the western sun set since Wednesday and had had Blax MiG weld a new staircase up top so she could walk instead of climb. He did what she asked with such rapidity that she often saw her request was honored before she thought something *could* -let alone *would*- be done. Her baby no doubt felt a similar slim -timeless- gap between its *wants* and its *gets* from her. The baby would barely utter a half -inchoate- cry and the breast would be revealed, the colostrum would flow and the babe would be sated and warm.

Her genome prevented the change in secretions, her milk would always contain the richest serum, redolent with antibodies and prolactin and vasopressin and more.

Blax -like a machine- worked so quickly and she had forgotten how many nights she had slept and thus how many dreams she had had since then and now; now the third night of her desire to sit up here and feed the baby, be alone and watch the dark come upon their land and think of where the sun ran off to; beyond neighboring states, beyond the Pacific, out over the Sandwich Islands and on its way to Japan.

She recalled all his stories of Japan, compressed into one *mise-en-scène* of the island as the coast was edged like a *Kiritsuke*, the mountains green like wet copper patina, the men & women silent as birds in soar upon the thermals above. She saw the whole world in a round; the life cycle in marble so smooth.

Her genome hummed now as the milk emptied the breast. Her mind saw cherry blossoms and the smells of the forest rose up to her and the grey of dusk settled down upon the gravel around their home and the trees linked in black laced fingers of one set of manifold hands. The forest was more than the hands, but the hands are what the eye watched. She felt love for all that was close and wonder for all far away and the last point of sunlight dropped behind the *Sangre de Christos* and the baby pulled and pulled and grew in her lap like a little pup she then thought.

She smiled on the inside as her mouth remained inert in the dark.

The tymbals of the *magiccicada* began to make noise -radio waves- and air waves from single bugs at stochastically distributed places in the swarm of the trees; the math of the universe pressed onto each creature like an invisible hand. Within seconds segmented-neighbors too shook off the dust of the day and began to vibrate in song. Each comrade effecting each other until all billion-and-a-half bugs began not merely to hum and thus sing, but syncopate now. The hertz reached forty and Valance's own cells too hummed and the baby began to absorb the energy -the milk as conductor and damper- from the teat.

She felt the other embryos inside her tilt up as if toward the sun; genuflect to their older sibling-star. She felt them pass the gene that would connect them all now and in the future -the most selfish gene of all- between them like a scored black-rock passed from hand to hand to hand.

She liked the irony of how the selfish gene would create the least selfish species of man.

Humans, the new humans, she thought, would be the least selfish eusocial species yet. And that was saying something considering the other ten -she did not count humans v1.0- were the apotheosis of noble and conjoined. Humans v.2.0 would be not just selfless, but consciously so.

And this made it doubly noble , she thought. The next generation would be all for one and one for all, and it would be in the blood, the blood her marrow -and her ovaries- made .

Her genome began -from that S86 marker- to code for a new allele that burrowed down into the sequence and roots of codons and rungs of helix and ropes coiled around the nucleus of new cells all joined in one biochemical *aria* that matched the wings of the *cicadae* in the trees. It was as if the original 35-acres itself was the cell, and each tree was a wash of fluid, each bug a proton, Valance the neutron, with her baby the polyp. The cell was thus an industry producing the next chemical phase.

And the Roman music met the *cicadae*'s song in two streams and the waves flew and flowed into her and the baby's ears: Feels like spring again... we've sealed this feel again... feels like spring again.

42. Master & Emissary How art thou fallen
from Heaven, O' Lucifer, son of the morning
star! How art thou cut down to the grounds
which didst weaken the nations Isaiah 14:12
[King James Bible].

I tried to take one of the old prisoners into my confidence. I said, 'look, this is the manuscript of a scientific book. I know that you will say, that I should be grateful to escape with my life, that that should be all I can expect of fate. But I cannot help myself I must keep this manuscript at all cost; it contains my life's work. Do you understand that?' A grin spread across his face, first piteous, then amused, mocking, insulting, until he bellowed one word at me in answer to my question: '*Shit!*'

Man's Search for Meaning [Frankl, Victor]

Sometimes you see people who are so trapped and hurt that they feel that their violent impulse is actually the only way to achieve justice. Discriminating between vengeance and justice is not easy. People get pushed into positions where they have homicidal thoughts where you can understand. They've been pushed into a corner that where terribly unjust things have happened to them and things have serious consequences for their lives, and it's not surprising that they have vengeful and hostile fantasies and obsessions sometimes 12 Rules for Life lecture 4.18 [Peterson, Jordan]

I. 2037 e.v.

"No, the right hemisphere seems dominant actually. From all the neurological and neuro-anatomical work I've done on humans, chimps, canines and lizards, the dual-hemispheric brain in man is largely dominated by the right hemisphere which is exploratory, and predator-avoidant. However, the left side can be harnessed for aggression, grasping *vis-à-vis* predators.

“See, the left hemisphere controls the grasping right hand, this is an aggressive -neurological- motor action. *Grasping* ,” he emphasized. He squeezed his own hand and this movement of the *motor-cortex* reminded him to mist the orchids.

“And it can be used to grasp a predator, instead of merely warding it off with say, the left hand.

“But the way it seems to work is that the right hemisphere tasks the left with turning the right’s quote, *predator* into the left’s quote, *prey* . It’s taxonomic, but it -the left hemisphere- makes a man more defensively aggressive, forgive the self-canceling language there- but it makes him less likely to run from a fight he did not seek, less likely to put up open palms in defense, or work to compromise once engaged.

“The left-hemisphere makes him see the aggressor -the predator- as something to grasp -voluntarily- and beat it to death. It’s a unique protocol initiated in the right hemisphere, then transferred over to the left; and it’s a kind of delegation of things by the right hemisphere to the left,” he said and cleared his throat a bit.

“To hunt down what is a danger to you, so-to-speak, instead of hiding or merely walling off the garden is a new behavior in the evolutionary history of life.

“In other words, you let some chaos into paradise and get strong enough physically, emotionally, intellectually to grasp it and kill it and make the quondam predator’s hide into a fucking imperial robe and its skull into candelabra,” he concluded with some vigor. He had walked to the slab and was priming the sprayer. A few small nimbus clouds of water vapor doused the concrete and made the markings appear in relief.

“Wow, ok,” Steven said. He stared ahead, not turning to watch MO. The ivy looked like wet wall to him; he saw no actual leaves. The *stelae* were almost completely covered in the greenery.

“It’s a matter of how best to live in the world. Most people try to sort through problems logically, but they are under the command of their emotional brain the whole time they pretend to do this. So, evidence-based doctors pretend to use logic and data in this opiate crisis -quote *crisis* - even

though the actual evidence shows that the crisis is in illegal drugs not legally prescribed one. In fact, the refusal to proscribe opiates by puritanical doctors causes people to seek out street narcotics to self-medicate and this is the *loci* of harm.

“Doctors are doing more harm than good while believing -falsely- that they are behaving logically. They are not. The data would lead them to see - they’d have to acknowledge- that only seven or eight thousand people a year die from legally proscribed narcotics taken correctly; about the same as die from bicycle accidents.

“But their emotional brain is actually in control, and they hate the idea of people getting high. Opiates produce a euphoria, which is frowned upon by our deeply moralistic society. And when I say moralistic, I do not mean *moral* ; our society is not *moral* , it is immoral, but it has a moralizing tone. It hates for anyone to feel good.

“It deeply wants people in pain,” he said as he sprayed the orchids again.

“Now part of this is good, we think people ought to earn their euphoria through hard work and tended relationships and other pro-social behaviors; not merely push a button for it. The problem is that we cannot seem to figure out a rational way to handle this instinct. So, we ban drugs for pain, but we simultaneously let every seven-year-old have a cell phone even though that goddamn device is manipulating the brain in nearly the same way as illicit drugs; giving dopaminergic pleasure for stupid and unearned images.

“In fact, I could make the case -the metabolic case- that free and ubiquitous pornography is way worse than Vicodin. But, the medical establishment has so little control they are forced to exercise it where they can, and they can exercise control over prescription drugs.

“So, that is where they act, where they can. Like the guy who lost his keys looking for them under the lamppost for them, *because that is where the light is* .

“Doctors are sending patients in pain to the street to get heroin or Fentanyl and thus sending them to their deaths because the physicians can and will refuse to write a prescription. Their refusal to write a pain script doesn’t

help the patient, it makes it worse, but they can say, *well, I looked under the lamppost for my keys, I did my job* . Even though the keys are in the dark ditch a mile from the lamp,” MO said.

“So, what, just give them all the drugs they want?” Steven asked with bite. He had now turned to MO and was watching the water produce a cloud around the white petals; he always found orchid odd looking; prurient even.

“Give them what they need, keep them regulated, do your job. Patients will be more disciplined if you help them be disciplined, the data proves this. Again, less than 7,100 a year die from supervised prescriptions, while forty-five-thousand a year die from unsupervised drug use. The data is clear, supervise these people, give them pain relief, and help them stay off booze and heroin.

“Look, if the pain is a six, level-6, and the doctor says, *I will relieve half of that* , then the patient will augment with booze, which potentiates the affect and reduces the pain more. The patient is forced to this because he is getting a half dose; effectively he’s getting a half dose.

“But if the doctor says, *look I’ll give you a higher dose of the analgesic but you cannot drink and I will be doing random alcohol tests to enforce this* , then the patient has neither the need nor the luxury -he loses the *freedom* - of adding booze to his regime. That is enforced discipline without being punitive.

“His pain is attenuated by the correct dosage, not the stinted one, and he is subject to oversight for use of alcohol. That is how you do it if you are actually logical and left-brained and rational. But if you just don’t like that the patient’s pain is attenuated because you think he ought to be in pain and not so goddamn euphoric then you’ll figure out a way to manipulate the data -lie in fact- as Chris Christie and Joe Biden and the AMA did. You do this so you can justify not prescribing these very effective and relatively safe drugs. And frankly the narcotics are safer than the NSAIDs they proscribe with abandon. It’s risible,” MO said -he felt for the hundredth time- and he then checked the temperature of the soil for the flowers. It had risen from his morning check at 0600. But it was still only .05 degrees warmer than ambient temperature. MO augmented it by .025 degrees.

He almost placed a finger in the soil itself; he eyed the orchid with the most empurpled edges, fourth from the left. But he refrained and turned to listen to Tania as she spoke.

“But you always say that humans need more pain, more suffering, more challenge, to get stronger,” Tania said. She was feeling like Isaiah was having influence on MO and she wondered if they could maybe dial it back.

“Yes, and they do. But idiopathic pain is pointless and stupid. Acausal pain is not a good teacher. Imagine a father that just hits you no matter what you do; imagine if no matter whether you follow the instruction or disobey them, either way you get a whack randomly. What possible lesson is there in that? What happens is you become not stronger, not smarter, not wiser, you become hostile and vengeful and secretive and avoidant. You see that nothing you can do will help, so why bother? Why bother improving if both right and wrong answers carry the same rate of sanction?

“But, if pain is linked to stupid or immoral action or indifferent and amoral inaction, well, now you’ve got a system that can work at shaping a man into a wise and moral man.

“But, chronic body pain is a tyrant. It hurts you no matter what; no matter what you do it hurts you. And this is not a good teacher.

“It makes everything painful; so you say, *why bother* ? Instead we should reduce that pain, so the pain center of the brain can re-calibrate to the real world again. Then only those things which are unwise and dangerous and immoral hurt again.

“We are attempting to re-calibrate the man and his pain threshold so he may live again in response to the actual world. A man in chronic pain cannot survive long. He can’t tell what is truly bad for him, what ought to hurt versus what is capriciously painful. It’s like a tyrannical government in which everything is illegal. It makes people have contempt for the law; the very idea of right and wrong.

“And, further, chronic pain -like totalitarian governments- drive a man mad. And nobody -and I mean nobody- is admitting this. The whole world keeps insisting that he is a drug addict instead of seeing he’s drowning in pain.

Like Stalin saying millions of his citizen -the Kulaks- were criminals instead of admitting they were just productive and smart.

“But unless you’ve had 24/7 pain, you have no idea how much it hurts the soul, not just the body. The soul dies from it, you feel the same way as you’d feel under tyranny. In fact, our research shows that the same cortisol, epinephrine, and all the neurotransmitter effects of prolonged tyranny manifest under chronic pain.

“It’s the same response. The moral decay, the *ennui*, the anomie, the loss of trust, the loss of good will, the loss of hope all track for both conditions. And yet we in the West refuse to treat it. We instead label the man under the tyranny-of-pain as the problem. This is the same way the dictator, the authoritarian State, labels the iconoclast, the rebel, the freedom fighter as the problem; not the State itself. The AMA are tyrants blaming the victim not themselves,” MO said and breathed through the nose with a whistle.

“Ok,” Tania said thinking MO’s analogies seemed inapt; too creative. *That emperor’s robe and candleholder thing was weird*, she thought.

“So, anyway, the left hemisphere blots out all anomaly. We have enough data now to see this. It simply cannot see -cannot perceive- anomaly. And furthermore, it has more inhibitory neurons than any other animal on the planet, the human does, and the left-brain inhibits the right all the time.

“It’s like a guy that won’t let his wife talk at all. He just refuses to see anything new, different, not quite right. He won’t let the right side speak for a second to say what it in fact does see -i.e., the anomalous phenomena. The wife sees something strange, she sees it and the husband will not see it; nor let her speak.

“So, the right-brain just continues to collect anomalous data, it sees it and store it and manifest it in dreams maybe or in art, or bubbling away under the surface at all times feeding impulses of anxiety or fear or predatory avoidance or moralizing and regulatory interference that the left-brain keeps trying to ignore and ignore and ignore by over powering its emotional life with reason and logic and overt dismissal of these impulses and you end up with a few things happening. These things will vary based on the individual.

“Some will just use their logic to create a new false paradigm where they can react to their fear and right-brain anomaly detection by some totally stupid control mechanism that doesn’t address the problem at all.

“That is this left-brain anti-drug thing.

“But, look, the actual anomaly noticed by the right-brain is social fragmentation, *ennui*, anomie, chaos, that is real, people are coming apart, but the left-brain has refused to acknowledge the reality of it, refuses to see what is actually going on, that the country, the world is having a nervous break down over modernity and loss of tribal cohesion, loss of meaning, and purpose. It’s a culture with no organizing principle. And instead of seeing that, feeling it -feeling it in themselves- they ignore it and pretend their secular values are *a-ok* and that their amoral materialistic life is not the problem at all.

“Even though the right hemisphere can see it and is sending signals -admittedly opaque signals- the left is just feeling odd, nebulously odd about life. It has no articulated idea in its head of what the real problem is.

“Instead the left-brain overpowers the right and left-brain dominant people like doctors and engineers and politicians just focus on micro issues like drug taking or the 7% gender pay gap, or more money for education in the form of more and more school loans for education -that is more and more merely imposed ignorance- and thus they never address the real problem,” MO said as he measured the fluid levels inside the stems of each brown stalk of each flower. He looked for embolisms *via* density imaging. He recalled the inmate mentioning embolism as a potential phenomenon during cloning -*via* taking cuttings- which can prevent water from reaching the periphery of the plant; causing death.

MO had the *bots* take two cuttings from Plants #1 and #4 and -keeping them upright- place them in the aeroponic clone box.

“Why?” Steven asked. He watched the graftings move -carried- through the air like single bloom bouquets.

“Because the right-brain has been collecting decades of anomalous data that shows that we have a spiritual problem, not a material one. We are lonely, and in pain, and we lead meaningless money grubbing lives. And of course,

we take drugs, as they offer the ecstatic again, they offer what religion used to: *the opiate of the people* ,” Isaiah said as he walked from his side of the lab.

“See, Marx was not criticizing religion. Opiates then -and now- were *needed* pain relief. Religion then -and now- is *needed* pain relief.

“Marx just thought a decent society based on co-operation instead of competitive capitalism was the cure. I disagree, history disagrees, because he removed the necessity of chaos and replaced it with a totalizing ideological State. But he did not think religion was *bad* , no more than he thought opiates were *bad* . And we can not make the same mistake. Opiates are not bad, and neither is religion, what is bad is unnecessary pain, what is bad is chronic pain without an etiology; an avoidable cause.

“A broken leg should hurt, a broken heart should hurt, a broken promise between comrades or lovers should hurt. But a permanently -enduringly- painful leg, or heart, or relationship is no good. And without a way to heal, we are in permanent pain.

“Religion used to heal us, it used to take the sting out. But, we no longer believe in it; and instead we just buy more shit, make more money, behave more and more polite and phony and dishonestly so as to not disrupt the economy. Our entire reason for being is ignored, covered up and buried.

“We don’t have relationships anymore, we have *contracts* . We don’t have love, we have *accommodation* . We don’t have loyalty, we have *transactions* .

“We are men without a country. We believe in nothing. We think only of survival, and conformity and safety. We no longer have principles; because principles get in the way of the economy. The economy is all that matters to us now. And that makes cowards of us all, not the undiscovered country, but the fucking economy,” Isaiah said. He saw more data from cooling towers in France and Germany come in. Large viruses -*Leviathavirus bordex* at 1.6m genome sequence and *Megavirus chilensis* with a 1.2m genome sequence and 440nm in length- were collected and put in tubes to be shipped to Isaiah’s fourth LLC. The latest batch had just come in yesterday.

“Well, what are people to do, starve?” Steven asked.

“No, they are to learn how to take what they need from the forest and do so in league with a tribe that supports them, no matter what. A tribe that doesn’t excommunicate them and sentence them to death for having an unpopular opinion, or for being honest and vulnerable and real.

“We live in a world where who you voted for can get not just you, but your husband or sister, fired now. We live in a world in which if you admit to any taboo feelings you are exiled at once. This is a Jacobin society now; and the National Razor is working at full speed to shear us of every offending hair; any remnant of our ancestral -vestigial- legacy.

“And because nobody can live off the forest anymore -because they need to get sustenance from the economic machine- they can’t afford to tell the truth, can’t afford to be honest, cannot afford to be vulnerable.

“Atavistic man could hunt and gather and survive within the tribe that accepted him as long as he wasn’t a liar or cheat. Now, you are *expected* to be a liar and cheat; as the honest are beaten, robbed, and exiled to the moral wilderness to die,” he said.

Isaiah watched -tangentially- the data as it arrived, was inspected, and unfolded in the lab he had set up in France.

The reversion to virus from bacteria followed a similar route as the highway-man did once he lost his status as middleclass. He -the bandit- had long ago lost his ability to live from the forest and was exiled from decent society -one way or another- and was forced -all at once- to make a life among the ragged black line of the trees beyond the city.

Isaiah saw that the four variations of the particular bacterium trapped in these cooling towers of Europe couldn’t make a living on their own; and they needed to become brigand; steal from other creatures as all virus did. And a virus was not merely better at this than bacteria, they were built for it. Viruses were so much better than bacteria at getting inside a cell one could easily think God had made it so. Just like an outlaw’s mindset -and rapier- was superior for banditry -making his way inside the purses of women, the homes of the rich, inside the ribs of enemies themselves- than the *bacterial bourgeoisie* and the dull values of the modern man.

But some creatures were born bacteria and some born viruses; neither with *milieu* or desire that would produce any ambivalence at all. But, what interested Isaiah was those -of each species- that reverted back to the mean.

“What?” Tania asked; she heard Isaiah’s words, watched his countenance but often felt there was so much she missed.

“Look at the inmate,” Isaiah said as he let the *Megavirus* data keep coming in to the cloud; the *Mimivirus* too populated both the corporate cloud and his interface.

“His vulnerability *vis-à-vis* his relationships, the way he divulged how he felt about things, all of it was used against him by the crooked cops -Jeff Messangelo- and Michael Swinyard and Todd and Jeff and Chris and Jeremy and Dean and Kat and Sarah and all of them. They used his honesty, his willingness to live a principled life; a life of honesty and manners and all that. They used it against him.

“And this changed his environment.

“They didn’t respect it, they laughed at it. They admitted it too. Michael told him on July 25, 2015, quote, ‘*you shouldn’t have told me that Lyndon*,’ unquote. And he set up his con right then and there,” Isaiah shook his head and -absently- dug the dark rune out of his pocket and pressed it between his prayer hands now as he listened for her response.

“Told him what?” Tania asked.

“Lyndon told him how he loved Sarah, even though *he knew* she was bad news,” Isaiah said with all the phone records, interviews of the inmate, the police files all displayed on his interface like a photo array.

“And?” she asked.

“And Michael then used that to steal the business, knowing that Lyndon was weak, romantic, not tough enough to do what it took to fight off the hostile takeover. Lyndon -with that one admission- revealed he was weak and *naïve* .

“See, beta chimps, excuse me, humans -smart ones- are always looking for weakness in their opponents, and that was Lyndon’s fatal flaw. He loved his girls; all of them. And it made him look weak to his rivals. So, Michael,

who had no loyalty to anyone -a pure sociopath- saw that as weakness. And Michael was not wrong. Lyndon was weak; he thought more about all manner of things instead of fighting to the death for the business. Our favorite inmate blinked and he lost,” Isaiah said. Isaiah knew that the inmate didn’t exactly love them, but he said that he did and that was like bragging about a pocket full of cash. One was bound to be robbed -and beaten- even if the crooks found no loot after all.

“Well, maybe he deserved to lose,” Tania said. *He was not her favorite anything*, she thought. But it was now the nineteenth time she had heard that phrase and it was building -digging- trenches in her mind.

“Maybe. Shit, even he would admit that. But, at what price? At what price do we let a guy with that work ethic, that creativity, that magnanimity, that honesty, get it all stolen -not just once, not twice, but thirteen times- with no one defending him, no one sticking up for him, his own family refusing to acknowledge the pain, the hurt, the heartache? At what price do we let a man who is sullen and stygian -but mostly honest and half way decent- be robbed by everyone around him with a smile and sweet sounding lies?

“This is a legit question from an evolutionary perspective: how often are we to reward dishonesty and baboon smiles and slick con-men who act nice while they sink the knife, and punish good men who work ten times as hard, a hundred times as honestly, with a thousand times the benefit to society just because they are *kinda* rough around the edges? You believe in group selection?” Isaiah asked this and he saw the data from the cooling towers and how the mutant viruses, the quondam bacteria, the revanchist *eukaryotes* turned *prokaryotes* had nothing upon which to honestly feed. He ran more and more models of how they’d go from bacteria -honestly earning a living in the towers- to viruses of record size unable to make an honest buck in the slick modern towers.

He saw the reversion to a predatory model of robbing the remaining bacteria; the citizens of the spires of industrial exhaust.

The entropy was exported to the periphery, Isaiah thought, *but the periphery is a coast, and a coast is where pirates make anchorage -berth- and then set sail*. He then thought he’d simplify it for Tania.

“At what cost to our soul as a civilization do we let the worst thrive and the best die? How many honest men must suffer his fate before we see that the whole thing is in danger of collapse? It’s like the cheater versus co-operator algorithm. This is shown in bacteria colonies and flocks of birds and within simulations, by the way.

“A society of anything -any species- can survive with a certain number of free-riders, of cheater, and that number is about 1% to 5%.

“Well, humans have an irradicable sociopath problem of 2% to 5%. Those are natural and static levels over time and within the genome. And societies survive with that level. Bad things happen, but shit, even sociopaths do great things sometimes, they serve a function, we need them to be ruthless in times of great need. Look at the President, he is clearly a sociopath and also clearly what is needed.

“But, if people who are clinically non-sociopathic begin to behave like amoral or immoral people, well, now you are tipping the balance to 10-15-20% of neurons in a system acting as free-riders, liars, cheaters. And then the whole system falls apart. And guess who takes over then? In chaos, in collapse?” Isaiah asked as he squeezed the rock and the palm felt each facet the way the eye saw each gleam of a jewel and yet the mind saw only the blinding shine. He saw this narrative map onto the data of bacteria mining the earth for their food turn back into viruses that plunder other organisms instead. He saw that when a bacteria -many *nanometers* in length and breadth- were unable to make a living the honest way, that the most hardcore, the most adamant, the most ruthless -the 1%- turned into the most virulent and largest viruses around. These were who won the microscopic war.

“Sociopaths?” Steven asked, still thinking of the terrestrial plane.

“You bet. And it takes a long time to get out of the dark ages man, and just a second to fall from the heights of the Enlightenment. Order is unstable; but chaos and disorder can maintain itself for long periods. It takes a year to build a house, and an hour to burn it down. Decades to build a man of worth and wealth and value, and one second to pull the trigger and blow his brains out,” Isaiah said.

“Well, that is what he did,” Tania said; inverting his meaning.

“Lyndon?” Isaiah asked; he was incredulous she would miss his point so obviously. He saw first cause, but she saw only results. He saw bacteria could kill viruses actually; if given incentive and chance. He saw the law could beat the bandit but only if it was just.

“Yeah,” she said and scratched her chin.

“Well, see his genome is the antidote to the sociopath, and they -these antidotes- they exist at about 7% to 13% of the population; about 15% to 30% of men. So, about five or six to one. Anyway, they are the people who have a natural affinity to regulate the sociopath. But, they are the immune system now hamstrung by immune-suppressants,” he said. He was combining *cytokines* and *antigens*, but humans needed it simplified for now. He had not the luxury to expand. Isaiah’s eyes narrowed and focused in the ambient light of the lab.

“Immune suppressants?” she asked. She leaned against the slab as MO moved toward the edge and opened up space for her to rest.

“The State, and civil society will not let them -these men- do their jobs.

“Now, admittedly, the State does jail sociopaths, that’s true. But they allow many, many more to run free. 1% of our population is in prison. That is high for the world, but low compared to the 2% to 5% of the population that is sociopathic. For the State to regulate the psychopathic they’d need to jail around 5%; forever. And, only half of the jail population is even sociopathic, you see? That 1% number -the prison population- isn’t even all sociopathic. Most prisoners are psychopaths, sure; but the rest are either dumb -not sociopaths just dumb- and the balance of the jail population are what I call, *enforcers of the ancient norm*, i.e., the social immune system. Men like our favorite inmate,” he said it -*our favorite inmate* - again as the words wormed into their brains.

They both -Steven and Tania- looked uncomfortable. They felt uncomfortable. Like when you swallow a bit of food that has just a small ingredient that you can’t stand; like turmeric, or garlic, or anise. You can’t tell what it is but something small -minute- in that whole bite ain’t right.

“32% of jail populations are vengeance actors: men who acted in a vigilante manner to right a wrong.

“See, the State is not suppressing sociopaths at all, only .5%. That’s half of 1%. That is likely only 10% of the total of sociopathic people running around society causing havoc. And the State is also jailing a certain cohort of the immune-response genome, the *enforcers of the ancient norms* . The State, this artificial immune system is jailing about 5% of them. The very people needed to regulate the bad guys, the State is jailing them. So, it’s a bad equation,” Isaiah said. He’d run the models 1.125 million times; he felt *ennui* even have to explain such simple shit to these baboons.

“Why?” Tania asked. She still did not understand. She side-eyed MO who was now messing with the espresso machine again and it annoyed her; to her it felt like MO abandoned her -them- to Isaiah all the time. She felt MO did it too often for it to be random. She squinted the eyes.

“What happens is that in a normal system, there are free-riders or cheaters and this is in bacteria colonies and wolf packs and human tribes in the jungle of South America and on public utility work crews in Sweden too. It’s in each system. And these free riders are dealt with by other neurons, other bacteria, other wolves, other tribesmen. These are the parts of the natural immune system, just like our own immune system finds cheaters - viruses for example- and destroys them. These are the constituents of the immune system that push back against these cheaters in manifold ways.

“A bacteria colony will not reproduce with a cheater, and his -this cheating bacterium- his specific genome will be kept low *vis-à-vis* the colony. A wolf pack alpha will attack and exile the bad wolf, and in human tribes the cheater is shamed and made fun of and held in poor esteem and maybe even attacked and beat up by the sergeant-of-arms; and in extreme cases exiled for behavior that bad. And that sociopath does not mate very often. For millennia the cheater did not breed.

“But in modern human *milieus* , bad actors can get away with their shit by moving around from city to city. Not breaking laws *per se* -or by merely breaking small ones that the State has no interest in prosecuting- but that sociopath can go on and on forever cheating and cuckolding, and ripping off and lying and gossiping and undermining and behaving poorly; but at a sub-clinical level,” Isaiah said as he built columns of data on the larger *mimi* and *mega* and *leviathan* -viruses from the French lab.

“Sub clinical?” she asked.

“Yeah, this sub-clinical sociopath is not murdering; not robbing a bank. He or she is just lying a lot and stealing small things or conning a man out of his business because he -or she- has the lease in his -or her- name and it was an informal -a handshake- deal anyway. And so, our sociopath, well, she figures that the courts will rule her victim has no standing because it’s a grey-area business like medical marijuana which is legal enough to take tax revenues from but not legal enough to enforce contract law. Following so far?” he asked.

She nodded slowly.

“These sub-clinical sociopaths, they are savvy, smart, scheming. They know the rules and how to bend them so that they do not break. And they sleep with your girlfriend behind your back or lie about you -call you a thief or something- and this erodes relationships and eventually cause a mutiny in your business because your employees believe these incessant lies our sub-clinical sociopath tells all day. And the guy -let’s call him Jeremy Costilow- this evil fuck who started these dishonest rumors about our favorite inmate, well, after his sabotage he gets the employees to work for him now; he reaps the rewards. Crafty, huh?

“Like the bacteria mimicking the sugar cell in the gut; the wicked is called good and the good is attacked by the immune system itself.

“In the modern world the crafty crow is admired and rewarded. In the modern gut filled with sugar the parasitic bacteria fraudulently pretends to be of use to the biome; that fucker fits right in.

“Or let’s think of these sub-clinical sociopaths -let’s call them John and Jason who ran Patient’s Choice- let’s say they have some goons attack you and you defend yourself and then they call the cops on you and use that as justification to steal all your breeding stock and equipment,” Isaiah said. He had intercepted conversations between Jason Katz and John Scofeld, *and*, he thought, *the reconnaissance had showed that was exactly the plan of those two Jews*. Isaiah saw the way Jeanne Pinsof had scammed the inmate of all his material possessions too. *The Jews were gleaners*, Isaiah thought, *they could pick a body clean; like the crows. They were smart and had no*

compunction about such things; they never felt any moral obligation to treat people as human at all.

But if the inmate was violent in retribution that was immoral according to these people. Their morality was as flexible as his.

The Pinsof family knew how to manipulate people to get what they want. They called it business. And Jason and John knew -sneaky and smart as they were- that they could count on the hotheaded nature of Lyndon and so they plotted in a 3-stage coup. They used his nature against him; and it worked. It worked right up until it did not , Isaiah thought.

“Breeding stock?” she asked, interrupting his inner-thoughts.

“Yeah, Lyndon had two-hundred and fifty mothers. Those are the horticultural equivalent to two-hundred and fifty head of cattle for a herder. And all the milking equipment -let’s say- to extend the analogy; they stole all the dairy cow equipment and all the dairy cows and left him with nothing and could get away with it because again, it was a hand shake deal; a deal an honorable man makes & honors; a deal a sub-clinical sociopath does not,” Isaiah said as he located each of these people -above or below ground- on his map.

“Well, maybe Lyndon ought not do hand shake deals,” Tania said. She felt wised up and above the inmate who she felt was both wicked and *naïve* .

“Oh, he’d agree. But, that is not the point. What kind of society do we have when a man honorable and honest -a man who will not abide being attacked by *cholos* and gangsters and will in fact behave like a proud man and fight back- what kind of society do we have when, not the attackers, but the defender -the attacked- is jailed and loses all his business infrastructure and breeding stock? What does that say about the society? Think epidemiologically, ok?” he asked. He paused and gave them space to think of this upside-down world.

“Well, I don’t know,” Tania said because she did not know. It was hard to toggle between frames; the immune system was not society to her; and unlike Isaiah she couldn’t see the natural fractals up and down in scale.

“I do. It’s says that the immune system, the white blood cell -the good guy- is stopped by the State and the scum bag sociopaths are allowed to reap the

rewards. It's the exact opposite of what is ideal. It's an immune-system attacking itself, like an auto-immune disease that erodes the joints and kills the host by killing good tissue and allowing true pathogens to roam free.

"See, under a tribal social paradigm, the cheaters -the guys who attacked Lyndon- would have been beat up or killed and Lyndon would be vindicated by the tribe. Biologists call that, quote -*sequestration of the mutant* - and it's prosocial and necessary to prevent local population -or social- collapse.

"And in an ancient culture his business would have thus thrived. He would have benefited from the courage it took to ward off three attackers and help to regulate society. See, those three guys that attacked him were bullies and gangsters who were incessantly intimidating and robbing and insulting normal people -civilians- and they were shitty growers to boot; they had low IQs and no talent at all. Which is why they attacked Lyndon in the first place. He was too competent to be allowed to remain next to them, they reasoned.

"They were bad guys. Sociopaths. And his defense of himself was not just a defense of himself but a defense of good order, of the right thing, of the tribe itself. He took the risk for all of us. Not that he knew that, but his ignorance of the larger frame is irrelevant.

"But, at any rate, the incentives are inverted; *he* is punished by the State not *they*. The State did not punish the sociopaths. In modernity, the immune system is jailed not the virus," Isaiah said as he let a small smile go. He saw the immune suppressant parasite -the *toxoplasmosis* v.2.0 that he'd developed that attacked the immune system directly- upload into the cicada's perfect host system due to latency and a three-day mating period. He smiled at how he was recapitulating what he was critiquing and that humans would defend what he lamented until -of course- it was returned back on them. He saw he was hypocrite now, and man would be full-of-shit later.

He read *Proverbs 30:27* in his mind.

"I don't think you can call Mexican-Americans a virus," Tania said. She focused on the simplest part she could. It was all too complex so she reverted to what she knew.

“I just did. And these fuckers were a virus. And Lyndon did the right thing in defending himself the first time -with no violence the first time by the way, just the show of force was sufficient- but the second time he removed their prokaryotic asses from the gene pool. And that is the right thing. And a man like that cleaned Colorado’s streets of sociopath after sociopath one after another. He did it for himself not the greater good; he’s no hero. But the results were pro-social; not anti-social at all.

“Even Tess, this amoral and unimportant girl, stole from him and used her lease-holding trick to rob him. She was a woman of no code; pragmatic. And thus, she didn’t think of the moral thing, only the self-interested thing. She thought of the body, *at home in the body, absent from the Lord*,” he said with a raised eyebrow as Tania now completely lost the thread. Isaiah hated that look of confusion and so he moved on.

Humans were incessantly confused, he noted.

“She let him do all that work, provide all that equipment and money and training to her; taught her a skill, a trade, and then she just told him to *fuck off and get bent and go pound fucking sand*. She treated him like he was not important and not dangerous at all.

“And she did it because the landlord was her friend, even though -again, on a handshake- Arron, the landlord, made a deal with Lyndon, too. Even though Arron had a moral obligation to him, too. It didn’t matter, because they thought Lyndon was weak and that he’d let it go, because the State is the only immune system in town, right? In their heads, he was not going to do anything.

“People like that only care about power, not right and wrong. And they thought he had no power.

“So, they reneged and stole from him and did it with clear conscience and legal impunity. The State did nothing; and didn’t care at all. The State allows this shit over and over again. He was robbed thirteen times -literally- by business partners who kicked him out and took all his investment and work and labor and ideas. They took it; and nobody said one word. Not his family, not friends or lovers. Everyone just shrugged their shoulders and let him still buy dinner,” Isaiah said.

“He had money to buy dinner?” Tania said with a smirk. Again, she focused on the simplest part of all Isaiah said. She wasn’t going to bring up the civilians again, they had yelled at her last time for that.

“He had money. Yeah, he restarted businesses each time, the guy just started over twelve times. He didn’t stop and whine and cry. He just picked himself up and got after it and kept making money: \$2.1 million over ten years. But, his soul was taking the blows, over and over again. His soul was being destroyed each time he was betrayed by someone he thought was his friend or lover or business partner. His whole framework was being eroded and hollowed out until it could never hold all that weight.

“You ever seen a bone hollowed out, same circumference but half the density?” he asked as he scanned her bones and they were like all human bones; they were losing about 1% a year. She shook her head -on slightly vitiated neck- then nodded.

Isaiah saw his barges out to sea make food and fuel and absorb calcium and eject it too below the roots suspended in solution of brine.

“Travis -his brother- had one business partner try to rip him off; one -not thirteen- just one. And Travis got a lawyer and sued and won; the State intervened on his behalf. And that is the only hardship he’s ever had to face in business; the only attempted theft. So, Travis took on this moralizing tone. They thought linearly; thirteen was just twelve more than one.

“Nobody gave one shit about what was happening at the level of Lyndon’s brain and soul. Nobody. They thought it had no consequences, because they didn’t understand biology or math; they don’t understand convexity, exponents, or self-organized criticality.

“Lyndon has had his home burglarized with \$10,000 in guns stolen; his truck broken into; his car broken into; three motorcycles stolen; storage unit ripped off; had friends rip him off and his own girlfriend steal his product for years to the tune of thousands of dollars.

“He’s suffered indignity after indignity. See, he spoke his mind and that is what did him in. Ask anyone and they will tell you that he was just too damn uninhibited; he just said shit, and they didn’t like what he said. And thus, they all -like *Bildad* to *Job* - implicitly suggest that he deserved to be

stolen from due to this penchant of his to say taboo things. They thought - and said- that he had it coming. Like the girl who wears too short a skirt deserves to get raped, that kind of thing,” Isaiah said with a grin that made Tania feel slightly ill; his teeth were dark from the coffee he drank all day, and his gums and tongue were brown.

He clasped each hand in each hand. He spoke slower now.

“Being honest does not earn you respect or admiration today; to say it does is itself a lie. Some soft-paw Canadian university professor can say to tell the truth all he wants, but in the real world, an honest man is killed.

“Lyndon was too honest, relatively speaking; which is to say he didn’t hide his heart. And for that they all turned on him; each and every one of them. So, because he is a natural alpha,” Isaiah dipped the head a bit because he knew that wasn’t exactly right, and that the immune system analogy was getting further bastardized with this inexactness, but he moved on, “and the embodied -endogenous- *vigilante* archetype, he eventually had had enough. He -like all weighted things- set things right. And that is what nature asks of him, or nature wouldn’t have made him the way that it did.”

“Nature?” Tania asked. She still did not see the biology, math, the logic of nature and evolution and thus murder and revolution and flames. Isaiah was difficult to follow because he seemed to purposively occlude. It was as if he constructed sentences of three dead languages and a smirk at the end.

“Yes, nature designed him to protect honor over survival. Honor is a real thing to some men. It’s laid out in Nisbett’s book; look at testosterone levels and cortisol levels in southern white men *versus* northern men. It’s not even close,” Isaiah said as the book, *Culture of Honor* and its data sets populated the screen in the lab and were highlighted again on the cloud.

Tania looked at each mountain and valley of the graphs.

“White southerners from Scottish background -i.e., our dear inmate 16180339- have discernable increased levels of endocrine *chems* that reduce fear and increase aggression when insulted. They also feel the aggrievement more acutely -and chronically- based on the cortisol levels measured.

“Men from the northern states of the US, and men from English or French - i.e., farming backgrounds- have no such physiological responses. They find insults *amusing* . The data on this is massive,” Isaiah said as he pointed to plates 3a and 9c with his finger; the shadow ran down from the LED screen to the concrete floor of the lab. Tania followed it the best she could.

“Amusing?” Tania asked. She was always blindsided by how much Isaiah and MO knew; they spoke with conclusions already formed from the meta-data they could compile in fractions of seconds.

“Literally, amusing. They -northern Americans, aka the descendants of the English- do not get the same bio-chemical response to insult as southern Scots. The Scottish *diaspora* ,” he said -*diaspora* - as if this was central, but she just nodded even though she didn’t see why that mattered. Isaiah added details she felt were irrelevant.

“Our inmate,” Isaiah continued, “suffered the worst insults to his honor over an over until he snapped. It was inevitable, and in fact, it should have happened much earlier; he showed massive restraint.”

“Restraint?” she was thinking Isaiah -inconceivably- meant that forty-six murders were the height of *restraint* . When she was overloaded with data like this she found it hard to keep the timeline straight in her head.

“Yeah, remember, he was cuckolded many times, robbed thirteen times, lied to and about upwards of a million times, and laughed at behind his back, insulted to his face, and threatened by cops and robbers alike, all while his plotters were plotting even worse deeds. And yet he still refrained from using violence for forty-four years,” Isaiah said.

“Well, he used violence many times before that,” Tania noted.

“Yes, he fought beginning at age seven, and fought many times into adulthood -always over honor- but he never killed anyone until he was forty-five. He didn’t even beat their asses -his adulthood rivals- during the ten years between 2007 and 2017.

“He compromised; moved on; let it go. This was the decade of the worst of the crimes against him. He pulled his pistol on those three -including Brian Thompson, now deceased- who attacked him, but he never fired it, he

merely used it to get them to back off after they shoved him. Remember, he deescalated violence then, he did not escalate it.”

“A gun though?” Steven broke in.

“Steven, he was attacked by three men. They used violence; he merely pulled the gun to get them to back off. That is not only legal, it’s noble,” Isaiah was technically correct as stated, but he failed to mention it was over *pique* rather than *fear* ; which is technically what made it illegal in fact. Mindset mattered in cases of self-defense. One had to fear for their life; not merely be defending their honor. Fear was sanctioned -by the law- not one’s pride.

“Legal?” Steven said with incredulity.

“Yeah, Denver prosecuted him maliciously, but they had no case. He followed the law. The civilian has a right to self-defense in proportion to the assault. He was surrounded in an L-shaped ambush, threatened and shoved. Therefore, being in *reasonable fear for serious bodily harm* , his brandishing of the weapon was legal.”

“Well, why did he plead guilty then?” Steven asked. Tania nodded along.

“To avoid prosecution; they gave him a deferred judgment and probation, so he took it. He could have fought it and maybe won. But, if he lost he would have done sixteen years, and the Feds could have jumped in due to it being in a medical marijuana warehouse. And again, that substance is legal in Colorado but illegal federally, so he could have been charged with using a gun in furtherance of a drug operation. So, he took the goddamn deal; even though he did nothing wrong,” Isaiah said with 92% valence to the facts and 84% self-similarity to the truth.

“Look, I just would have walked away, like his brother said, *change his lifestyle* ,” Steven said.

“Yes, you and his brother would have walked away. You have no need to protect or defend your honor or your community or principles of *right & wrong* . You only think of your own hides; your own safety and that is it. You are smart -pragmatic- guys. You care about money and staying out of jail at all cost. Even at the cost to your soul, your pride, your women, your kids, your country, morals, all of it. You do not give a shit,” Isaiah said with

an increase in valence to both fact -96%- and truth -99%- as he tilted the head down and the eyes up.

“Well, that isn’t fair,” Steven said.

“You just admitted you wouldn’t stand on principle,” Isaiah said.

“Not in that case,” Steven said.

“In what case then? Name a case that you’d risk your life or going to jail for; name the cause. Ever for honor, for morality, for country. Name it then. But while you’re thinking, I know that Travis couldn’t name one, that much I know.

“That guy is weak and amoral, and society elevates him above Lyndon. Society says Travis is good and Lyndon bad, even though Lyndon stood up for Donna Ladd as a boy, and for the underdog a thousand times in his life; from Ohio Citizen action sticking up for poor black people against corporate polluters and an indifferent city hall,” Isaiah said, winding up for another long lecture, as he was interrupted.

“Wait, we’re talking about the inmate, right? The neo-Nazi?” Tania asked with sarcasm.

“The inmate is not a neo-Nazi. He hates blacks, but he hates Nazis too. He is racist not a socialist,” Isaiah clarified.

“Well, still, he did what -exactly- for blacks in Ohio?” she asked defensively.

“He worked for an environmental non-profit that advocated for poor and working-class families, many of whom were -in fact- black. He went door-to-door in black neighborhoods organizing people. This is the same job that got Obama elected into congress, then the Senate and then to President by the way,” Isaiah said.

“Oh, now the inmate should be President?” Steven asked with elevated tone and widened eyes.

“We could do worse,” Isaiah said with a face that showed no hint of joking. They both were stunned. Isaiah continued speaking.

“I just mean he was earning two-hundred bucks a week, living in a shithole in Oakley -a suburb of Cincinnati- with a girl he had loved since he was

fifteen -he was at this point, age twenty-three- and his job was to go door-to-door and get poor folks -and black folks- to rally together to fight city hall and Monsanto. He was fighting on principle. That is my goddamn point. You guys purposively miss my points, I think,” Isaiah said. He gilded the lily a bit -always making sure the inmate *loved* everyone in these stories- but despite this garnish, he was more or less accurate.

“That’s not true, we just like to clarify,” Tania said as Steven nodded. They had missed over 61% of his points.

“Travis never did anything like that. Travis never did anything except make money and play by the rules to enrich himself.

“Anyway, circa 1998, our favorite inmate moves to Zendik to fight for a new paradigm, a pre-figurative revolutionary culture, where honesty and tribal dynamics were modeled after the *Lycurgun* ideal. He helps build a new culture of sixty-five people that take in the down trodden and abused and helps teach them to work and be honest and tend goats for crying out loud,” Isaiah was getting ramped up again -even flat out lying about the purpose of Zendik- as they slowed him down with another interruption.

“Goats, huh?” Steven asked.

“Goats, yeah. The pastoral life is a noble one; and he loved it. And he helped try to offer an alternative to modern selfish materialistic society, he tried to *live his idealism* . Who does that? You? His greedy, shallow, brother? Hell no. Man, the guy was trying to live an integrated life; living with honor, living his ideals. And nobody -not family or friends- ever once thought highly of him for it. They looked down on him for it; they used words like *idealist* as epithet, pejorative. They just smelled the goat shit on his clothes; on his skin.

“Look, the brain is two halves -the rational and the emotional- and modern society tries to use the rational to deny and suppress the emotional. He integrated them. Then, the next level is not just being whole in psychological sense, not just integrating one’s emotions and reason, but then living as one feels.

“This is phase two: matching one’s actions to one’s ideals.

“He did this. Zendik was that next jump; he put his idealism into action and lived as he felt. Who does this? No, everyone has their ideas and ideals, half suppressed by their -quote *rational* brain unquote- and then 99% of people don’t even implement those. They don’t even try to live an integrated life. Most people don’t even eat the food they know is good for them, ok?

“People eat garbage, they work jobs they hate, they get pushed around by everyone, they never speak up or do anything creative or authentic at all. They just make money and live in the suburbs and pretend to believe in God and hide their true feelings from their wife or kids and from themselves.

“That is 99% of people. And Travis -the brother that is supposedly better than Lyndon, better in society’s eyes- he isn’t even curious or principled enough to integrate his right hemisphere -his emotions- into his own head, his own philosophy. He denies all emotion, denies basic nutrition and exercise requirements, and then he lives in the most inauthentic and full-of-shit manner: lying to his wife, his kids, his neighbors and customers. Travis tells his wife he believes in God, when he is an atheist. He lies to his own children about his lack of faith.

“Who does this? What kind of man lies to his own kids about such deep ontological matters?

“And yet he is the *good* brother? Really? By what standard? Does it ever occur to you what living in such a hypocritical society does to the soul of men? Do you think of long-term effects of this? We do longitudinal studies on medicine, but not culture. Why?

“Society is -can be called- evil -definitionally evil, axiomatically evil- when the truthful one is *bad* and the liar is *good* . That is axiomatic. And Travis is beyond just a liar, *he lives a lie* . He never stands up for anything; not even himself. And he is normal, the norm.

“That wife of his hates men, runs him into the ground, and insults our favorite inmate. And Travis allows it. He’s so afraid of his wife and of discord that he allows her to insult his own kin; his own brother. She did it over and over with impunity and glee and Lyndon could have cut her down in a second but he -again- showed forbearance -and discipline- and let it go.

But, I've seen the replay -the way that woman spoke to our favorite inmate- and it was horrid.

"She was so ruthless and brutal and undermining of him because he was a man laid low, in a low spot and she saw a once strong man made sick and she took her shots while he was down," Isaiah was getting furious as he felt their resistance to what was obvious to him; his anger was seen as a catalyst to his data and logic. He implicitly felt the hotter he got the more they'd have to absorb the data beneath all his vex. He again saw the *toxos* and the *magiccicada* and the way they incubated perfectly under the lab. He wanted to feel them on his feet; but through the boots he could not feel. He unlaced his boots as Tania spoke.

"What did she say?" Tania asked as she felt her head move back at Isaiah's removal of his footwear. Her words came out slower. Her eyes widened.

"Oh, she made all manner of snide comments, like that he ought to be punished for this and that. And that, well, like he was a little kid. One time she said that his niece -her ten-year-old daughter- ought to talk back to him because he was just a man, right? *just a man*, she said.

"She insulted his relationships as too fragile, when it was his honesty that destroyed them not his weakness. She never saw that her own relationship coheres precisely due to her husband eating her shit all day. Lyndon stood up for himself against modern women and that is why his relationships failed, but she just clucked her tongue at him for it. She rubbed his nose in shit about Wells Fargo," Isaiah was meandering a bit, but his feet felt good on the concrete floor -he looked down at his footwear now off- and he tried to feel the insects buzzing.

But he felt nothing.

"Oh, Jesus, Wells Fargo again?" they both -Steven and Tania- said in near unison. The cloud recorded the 387th mention of Wells Fargo and the fourth example of an objection from a PraXis employee. The LED lights above the ivy moved .01 degree to the setting west.

"Look, they called her and asked for Lyndon -you know how creditors are- and she told a big ugly story about this call -she told it in public- and she

went on and on about how she was forced to lie, and how hard it was - quote, *how hard* unquote it was- to lie to the bank for him.

“She was maudlin and garish and lying through her teeth. She made it sound as if Lyndon was to blame for the fact that Wells Fargo had let Michael steal right from his bank account and had refused to follow through on the home equity loan. Did you know that on the day of closing they changed their minds? And Wells Fargo is the largest corporate criminal,” Isaiah began to ramp up for another rant on that bank’s maleficence.

“I know! I’ve heard it a hundred times,” Steven said loudly. He had -in fact- heard it sixty-eight times.

“In US history -largest corporate criminal in history- according to the AG, the FED chairman and the President himself,” Isaiah plowed on.

“Jesus, we know. But he still had to pay his bills, Isaiah. Nobody gets to not pay their bills,” Steven said.

“Oh yeah? So, what about the hundreds of thousands of dollars owed to Lyndon? Do *they* have to pay their bills to him?” Isaiah asked with adamant logic.

“I guess, but that’s *his* problem,” Steven said with perfect amorality.

“So, let me get this straight,” Isaiah paused, “the people who he owes money too deserve their money and that is *his* problem; and the people who owe him money well, that is *his* problem too? That is your story?”

“Look, I don’t know,” Steven said realizing his position seemed slightly weird.

“Yeah, nobody knows. Everyone just likes kicking a man when he is down. They liked it; and that wolfish wife of Travis’ liked it best. She saw the opportunity to insult and make fun of and jab at him when he was vulnerable and humble and weakened from battle. She took it and licked her chops, man. And his older brother let it all happen and didn’t say shit.

“And Lyndon took note,” Isaiah said with a deliberate pause. He tossed the black rock from hand to hand and squeezed the floor with his toes.

“And that is what a man does; he takes notes and waits to see if anyone will defend him. Because if he has to defend himself, it will be ugly. Ugly, little

sister,” Isaiah said with a big smile. He was explaining the logic of what had already happened and yet they still couldn’t see any logic at all.

“You people do not get it. If any of you had stood up for him at any time, his rampage would never have happened. He waited to see if anyone would take his side, and nobody did.

“Look, Lyndon offered his own father a job, two years before the final theft. Lee asked for a job and Lyndon -because he knows that retired men die very quickly due to lack of purpose- said, yes . He agreed even though he knew they would fight and it would be hard. He said, yes , because no way would he let his father die from lack of purpose.

“Tavis was asked for a job too by Lee and he -Travis- said, *no* . He said, *no*, because, it, quote, *wasn’t logical* , he said. See, Travis has never stood up for anyone or anything except himself and even then, even for himself only 10% of the time. He has no principles and if he did he would never implement them. He doesn’t know that his own father -metabolically- needed a job, you know, needed a purpose. And he didn’t know that this meant that Travis -as his son- ought to give him one; whether it was rational or not. Nope, he just said, *no* .

“He didn’t care if his own father died.

“And yet, he’s the *good* son. Why? Because he never speaks his mind; never says anything rude or offensive. Lyndon says outrageous shit, he speaks his mind. Of course, he actually has principles which often requires that one speak their mind.

“But if you are a *man for all seasons* -a total wimp and soulless shallow functionary- like Travis, well, of course you never feel the need to speak up. You can pretend to be nice as pie and everyone will think you are a great guy. Meanwhile, you refuse to give your dad a job while -conversely- your -quote *immoral and selfish* unquote- brother says, yes to the old man precisely because he doesn’t want the old man to die.

“That is your society Steven, that is it. The man with principles who educates himself and digs deep to discover the truth -a man who sticks up for the underdog- is called rotten and evil and no-fucking-good because he uses bad words.

“Yet the man with no principles, no loyalty to honor or those below him -no ability or desire to sacrifice for the common good- the man who never educates himself on the moral literature and the science of how to be a good man, oh, but the man who wears a slick baboon smile and is fake and shallow and stupid he is -by moral alchemy- he is somehow a *good man* . Oh, he’s a rule follower, that’s right, the rule follower is the good man in modern society, how nice for all you who follow the fucking rules. How pretty.

“Look, Lyndon is obnoxious, ponderous; he’s a hypocrite and no fun at parties, ok? I am not saying the guy is fun to have around. I’m saying he’s necessary,” Isaiah was now pointing at them -the rune clutched in his right hand- and leaning forward. His coffee-stained teeth were more and more bared; more and more brown; more and more heading toward black.

“The immune system is what makes you feel like shit; did you know that? When you have symptoms of illness it ain’t the pathogen that makes you sick; it’s the immune system itself that makes your nose run, your throat sore, your body ache; makes you febrile,” Isaiah was still pointing at them and lecturing them on immunology as if it was all upon which he was upbraiding them.

“We know,” Tania said; although she had forgotten that particular fact, she admitted to herself as the lab chattered with birds and bees and the HVAC system that blew on her hair. She expelled -her CO² - out forcefully -thus, loudly- to regulate her allostatic system. Each of them heard the noise and their own allostatic system roiled at her discontent. Her air out, their air in, each system balancing against the wind; Isaiah pressed on.

“Well, good. Because he is the immune system and he makes you all feel like shit, I get it. Shit, even he gets it. But, you shouldn’t take him out and condemn him any more than you’d condemn and remove the immune system. He’s necessary. And the negative side effects are part and parcel of the cure. You people want nice and polite people to be the only ones around; the only ones allowed in your society?

“Well, guess what, pathogens are nice, they mimic your own cells; they act all nice to get in and infect you. You understand basic epidemiology, right? *Nice* is tantamount to a *lie* , and pathogens are nice and friendly right up

until they kill you. And your own immune system is rough and mean and gross and uncouth and yet it saves your goddamn lives.

“Well, what if you didn’t allow white blood cells or *cytokines* to clog up the wound and fight infection? What if only nice and polite cells could roam the highways and byways of your diseased corpus? How long would you last you think?

“Sociopaths are nice and friendly too; so charming and nice; right up until they rob you and lie about you and lay you low. And yeah, Lyndon ain’t nice, and he ain’t friendly, but he never robbed nobody, and he didn’t gossip behind their backs -if he had a problem he said it to your face- and he didn’t undermine his own people for fun like his own family did to him.

“If I was Lyndon I would have snapped earlier. He had every right to take those people out. He should have killed more. His own brother wouldn’t even defend him under ideal conditions; shit, imagine if Travis was in Germany in 1939, that fag would have been an Auschwitz guard in two seconds, man. That guy -and the father- they are both total conformists and amoral creeps. The mom ain’t no better either, he should have put a bullet in them all,” Isaiah said with his jaw and teeth set like a blade in a table saw; low meant merely to score the lumber.

“Isaiah, you cannot talk like that, you are crossing a line,” Steven said; his own allostatic system was ramping up and fear increased then brief anger tamped it about 17% down.

“What line? I can’t advocate for vengeance now? I have to pretend that the State is synonymous with justice when we know it is not? I must? I must pretend that the daily accumulation of banal sins doesn’t -in fact- lead up to great moral catastrophe? I must ignore the math and the biology now?” Isaiah asked as his skin outgassed *bio-chems* - comprised of androgens and cortisol and epinephrine- that would make them each -everyone in the lab save him- nervous. This would activate the predator response circuit in the brain stem, *via* the olfactory system.

And they’d begin to submit. First in the roof of the brain chemistry, then in down the spinal column until the caissons of the knees buckled just a bit.

He was intimidating them with the *bio-chems* that they'd naturally release if they believed he'd hurt them. He had to -and did- circumnavigate their socialization and target their old systems with pure chemistry: the X's and O's of protons and atoms and chiral molecules. He'd override their insipid education that told them that nobody was violent anymore -not in professional circles- and he'd make them feel the amalgam of fear and reverie a natural prey animal would feel: awe.

"Well, I think we ought to just take a time out," Tania said. Her own jaw vibrated, her hands felt weak. Her eyes told her there was not enough distance between Isaiah and her. Steven couldn't even speak. Words would not form, only sounds that he kept sequestered in the lungs and the throat.

"Yeah. You got that right," Isaiah said and turned to walk away.

Isaiah reset his system to knock down all his own androgens and dopamine in his *dmPFC* ; he re-regulated his adrenaline and cortisol and took down BP and heart rate by opening his vascular systems by 1%. He smiled at how easily he could rile them up; and how his own system could toggle between outrage and total calm in .07 seconds.

He monitored Steven's and Tania's allostatic and *mesolimbic* systems now and stored the data on the cloud. He needed that analog to recreate the feeling -metabolically- later as part of an algorithm. They had been perfectly outraged and offended and produced all the biochemical and CNS electrical signaling and endocrine and gene expression that correlates to these states. He would now be able to build exact metabolic engrams to mimic this for their genome and for each genome he selected going forward.

He could design deeply felt, historically mediated in the *hippocampus* , and peer-reinforcing outrage organically and deliver it *via nanobots* as PraXis - and MO- had already done for the oxytocin and vasopressin vectors in the 2018 election. He had tried to build outrage *chems* before but they just didn't take unless they were endogenous to the host organism and could endure a reinforcing loop within and without the host.

He had built outrage, then fear, then awe in three distinct modules. He had the algorithm now and it was organic. It was going to be easy to upload on a *bot* -a billion and a half *bots* - and send them out into the world.

Now, he had the blueprint and could move forward. Their emotional response to his provocations had given him a good envelope with which to work.

The introduction of just a few bonding and trust chems was crude by comparison , he thought, *this was going to be something quite different in fact* . Outrage on a deep moral level was something much more complex; and what he needed had been built over years by Isaiah prodding and insulting and jamming both Steven and Tania separately and now together; in one final push he'd built the vector he needed.

Isaiah let the pages 137-138 from *Behold a Pale Horse* , by William Cooper, load into his interface: The Federal prisons (sic) at Florence, Arizona could hold 3,500 prisoners. It is presently being kept in condition by approximately 400 legally convicted prisoners... H.E.W., by law, is operated in conjunction with the United Nations through the World Health Organization. Back in 1948, the International Congress on Mental Health declared in its pamphlet, MENTAL HEALTH AND THE WORLD CITIZENSHIP, that "prejudice, hostility or excessive nationalism may become deeply embedded in the developing personality without awareness on the part of the individual concerned... efforts of changing individuals must be appropriate to the successive stages of the unfolding personality.

"Principles of mental health cannot be successfully furthered in any society unless there is progressive acceptance of the concept of world citizenship."

Isaiah had the subtle chemical and neuro-anatomical structures of PraXis' employees' long-term animosity and hatred of him now in which to build the blueprint. He could create that feeling in anyone in which he could reverse-engineer the genome. He could make anyone carry a grudge against anyone now; and these feelings would be reinforced socially, not dissipated.

And then -secondly- he could make anyone submit. He could build the extremes of human -animal- feeling in any brain and any time. He no longer had to play games.

The normal MAO-A gene -the long allele version that Steven and Tania and 83% of people had- would now be able to be bypassed and the *nano-introduced* chemicals would allow for dopamine to remain unmetabolized

for up to a thousand times their normal duration as well. Isaiah smiled as this was the salient part; the enduring pique, the compounding interest of pain and anger unmetabolized in the soaking brain.

All he needed was the genomic data for each person he wanted to manipulate.

And that meant anyone, anyone at all , he thought as he had access to 99.99% of all DNA on the planet. He was half way between them and the western wall of the lab; the greenery was lit up by the LEDs cycling through their blue-wave function and the birds buzzed around the wasps like trucks around motorbikes on some highway out on the archipelagos in the Pacific. The dirt at the edge of the lab -the dry moat- vibrated.

Small grains bounced as if on the skin of a snare drum in buzz roll *crescendo* .

He x-rayed the dirt with his eyes and saw each *majiccicada* in hibernation and a deep root-tendrill of the ivy and morning-glories in the slumbering insect's mouth like a straw.

"We'll see how polite you all are once you can feel decades of insult and oppression on your endocrine and central nervous system tethered to permanent corporeal pain annealed to fear and violent priming cues," Isaiah said as he felt his own sweat make the stone in his hand feel greasy and warm. He said this as he was far enough into the lab that they couldn't hear much more than a murmur of speech that made them uneasy for reasons that they couldn't articulate at all.

II. 2020 e.v.

"He thought God was *not* omniscient and omnipotent," the inmate said.

"Iain McGilchrist?" MO asked and began a double analysis of biometrics again; the *fMRI* & *PET* data mapped onto five different models of human brain activity. The five gradations were his new model for psychopathy. It included non-functioning *amygdala* and inactivity in the *orbital*, *ventral* and *temporal cortices* .

The SNPs of the genome were known but not included in his current live-stream data.

The purpose -as was true always with their speaking each week- was to monitor the gene expression, the endocrine mien, the brain waves and chemistry and the totality of each variable in the man both when recounting violent or anti-social behavior -scenarios of perceived injustice perpetrated against him- and lastly, expression of either guilt or satisfaction with the recalled behavior.

It was also worth differentiating between remorse and guilt for *inaction* as well as *action*.

The inmate often felt terrible for failing to act in a violent way in order to right a perceived wrong; and this tied in nicely to Nisbett's work on the brain and body chemistry of Southern white males of Scottish decent. MO uploaded 908,077 more data points to the cloud as he showed -to the chattering inmate- facial affect in order to encourage the man to speak more forthrightly.

MO both listened and thought at once.

MO supposed, that to let something go -to not respond with vengeance- made the man of honor roil inside with shame and guilt. And thus it was obvious to MO that a moral man -a man of great moral feeling- could be wrought up with guilt by the same behavior that most men would find not merely acceptable but *moral* . Some men were opposites; not in mere behavior but in location on the 360 degrees of the moral action circle. Some men saw lack of violence as immoral.

This would blow the minds of 86% of mankind , MO thought. But not all killers were immoral; rather, they had finally killed because they couldn't stand the pressure, the guilt, the shame of the perceived moral failing of letting things go.

To let something go made average men feel good; as if this average man had risen above the base desires of the animal body. But letting things go made the highly moral man of certain alleles feel terrible. People -at about an eighty-five to fifteen ratio- were metabolically opposite from each other. *This was basic -obvious- and yet most of mankind had no clue,* MO thought. He nodded encouragingly as the inmate continued to speak on this and that.

The same feelings that regular people feel *vis-à-vis* the world had the reverse effect inside a man like him -like the inmate and his cohort- which constituted roughly 13% to 15% of the male population. To take an insult made these men feel as remorseful as to respond to one would make the other 80-plus percent of the population. This added a nuance to the moral landscape that most social scientists had not dealt with to date.

MO found it salient. He nodded more and pursed the lips as the inmate recounted more details of his ideas on things up and down and all around.

The inmate saw his years of forbearance and getting along with his tormentors and his willingness to let things go -the decades in which he acted in a way that society deemed prosocial- as a great moral failing. If he was a psychopath with no moral feeling, if he never felt shame or guilt as psychopaths do not feel, he likely never would have been violent at all. MO saw that -no matter how obvious it was- this would be incomprehensible to nearly nine out of each ten -modern- human beings.

James Fallon, the famous neuroscientist who found out -*via* brain scans- that he in fact was a psychopath, was non-violent and had never even felt an impulse for violence. He had no architecture for the guilt or shame that attends to a man of honor.

Fallon was like all psychopaths: pragmatic.

He would coolly -rationally- do whatever he wanted without shame or guilt or empathy at all; but -MO recounted- Fallon merely didn't *want* to be violent or harm people. And so he never did; psychopaths do whatever they want. Moral men respond to pressures of guilt and shame.

To show that the man who had murdered 46 people was more morally oriented, more deeply affective, empathetic and capable of massive metabolically-mediated and discernable shame and guilt than an author, neuroscientist and family man -who had never even been in a fist fight- was going to be difficult to prove, MO saw. It was something that while true, empirically obvious and theoretically explainable in 45 seconds, it was a phenomenon that MO knew few people would accept.

He saw this as a challenge he'd accept and pursue.

He was even dubious his own co-workers would be amendable to it. It was that unconventional a thing to posit. But, as he would tell them, he didn't care where the data led, he had no dog in the fight. He was -above all of them- objective. If they didn't like the data, he'd be willing to let it go. But he'd show the data and let them turn away.

But I will show it to them , he thought.

It did earn him .004 seconds of thought that one of the traits of psychopathy is the ability -the proclivity in fact- to be objective. Objective is to not care; to be objective is to not take sides; and taking sides was the *sine qua non* of morality. James Fallon himself had noticed that and was eager to admit that he was so objective that he could take the side of strangers over his own children if he thought his children were -objectively- wrong.

MO processed this about himself with no further elaboration.

"Yes," the inmate said as he continued speaking to MO. MO processed the new algorithms and the data compiled over the last three days, "and he thought God was becoming -McGilchrist use that word, *becoming* - and anyway, Jordan agreed that in order for *good* -capital *g* - *good* to come into the world, God needed man. And this is a very subtle idea. But God, being omnipotent and omniscient, lacks only one thing: limit. And so, He creates a limited being, man; mankind. Man, who can choose -voluntarily- to bring Good into the world."

"Ok, how?" MO asked inmate 16180339.

"Well, Peterson says *via* the *logos* , by speaking truth into the world. He sees this as the first and last thing; that good manifests like in a material way; the way stars emerge from the dusty nebulae. But this is the migraine-aura of true speech."

"Wait, why is true speech migrainous?" MO asked.

"Oh, I was being half flippant I guess; it's just hard man. Truth is neither natural or easy and anyone who says it is, well, is a liar. And that guy is basically full of shit, look at who he surrounds himself with? That phony dork, Dave Rubin? That unctuous tour manager of his? Ghouls from CAA? Peterson is a fraud. I hate saying it, because he is so often right and decent. But it's true," the inmate said with a grimace.

“Ok, go on,” MO said.

“Well,” he paused, “and I did not believe this for years, you know? I didn’t believe the idea that true speech was sufficient for moral good; which is why I worked toward a larger social utopian vision. Now, I do not think that is useful. My previous attempts and beliefs were wrong so I agree with him here. But, I still think one must do more than mere talk. I am still trying to do more than speak clearly. I see speaking clearly as the first thing; but then a man must engage in building a model of something more concrete.”

“Like what?” MO asked. He made eye contact based on an algorithm that was stochastic but made sure to reassure the inmate in timeframes between three and twelve seconds.

“Well, I like to teach, I like to help others learn things. And for a while I wanted to build a commune of sorts up at elevation. I had this idea that I would write down my philosophy, speak truth into the world, and see if people wanted to live in the forest with me.

“See, introverts -in my opinion- need nature in a way extroverts do not. Extroverts like the city and the six billion watts of bullshit; they think Vegas is a good idea. But no introvert likes Vegas or any city really. Introverts like nature; and my land, man, it was epically beautiful,” the inmate said and thought of it the way one might think of a dead lover or brother that was once grand.

“I’ve seen photos, it is isolated, fecund and lush. Striking,” MO said and hung markers on the changes in brain states and gene expression in each SNP and brain region and neuron along several vectors at once.

“Yeah, so I still think a real artist does that; he doesn’t just write books like *Fight Club* from a suburb of Seattle and watch as real fight clubs pop up all over the world. A real artist would have created a real fight club himself. Look, I liked the book; I did. But it lacked skin the game; that guy is safe and *bourgeois* and just fucking around masturbating to clever lines of literature. He isn’t risking it for something bigger than himself.”

“But imagine the crazies,” MO mildly abjured. He had access to all the digital -and 74% of the physical- communications sent to Chuck Palahniuk since 1990. The man was beset by lunatics.

“Of course; what, you think Zendik didn’t get crazies? But Wulf had the balls to do it anyway. Man, safe is not the goal; resiliency is. Don’t make the world safer, make yourself stronger. Get big, mean, tough, develop the psychic sense, build a bullet proof philosophy and then let the maniac come for you. That is what Wulf did and it was bad ass,” the inmate said.

“But you have lamented the corruption of Zendik,” MO rejoined still marking each gene expression change.

“Of course. Look, all men are corrupt, me especially. I had three meth-head girls in a bed without a cult, imagine the Roman shit I’d do with the *yogi* banner over my door. I am not saying *purity* , I am saying *balls* . I’m saying try something bigger than making money or getting famous. I’m saying build an alternative model, tinker, fail, try again. I’m saying the modern American materialist bullshit is not the only way to do modern life.

“The alt-right guys have said that materialism is gay; and I agree with them. Why buy more shit, why get a new car, or new clothes, or new anything just to impress people that are as dorky and gay as you? I’m not a Nazi, I have no use for any ideology, but the Marxists have a point about capitalism and the alt-right guys have a point about culture; we should try other ways, tinker, experiment on a small scale.

“In fact, that is the way to do it; not with large social engineering projects that apply to everyone, but in the Jeffersonian or Hamiltonian ideal, the laboratories of democracy idea that he said obtained to each state,” the inmate said as he felt pressure behind the ocular nerve of both eyes. He felt a headache coming on that he thought a glass of water might assuage.

“Are there race issues at the ADX?” MO asked -changing the subject- as he downloaded the data on objectivity into the new *bots* that were layering the inmate with promptings both in the left hemisphere and the *amygdala* . MO had implanted new *nanobots* behind the *hippocampi* with the updated data on objectivity and psychopathology. The inmate would now have that information as well. MO was building a loop between he and the inmate; wherein each would know what the other knew.

“Always, man, this is America, race issues are permanent. You know Lincoln wanted to send them all back? Each former slave back to Africa, man. Marcus Garvey style. We should of, they’d be happier and so would

we. Imagine though, things are so dumb that even though they hate America, if we advocated sending them all back they'd be in an uproar. That's how you know they are liars: when no solution is good enough," the inmate said as he shrugged and pulled the chains taut.

"Well, they think independently, right? There is no *one* black view on any issue," MO said.

"OJ?" the inmate asked.

MO laughed as he got the joke. "John McWhorter thinks OJ is a murderer."

"That dude gets it," the inmate said as the new data from MO sparked in his head like a lighter rolled by the thumb, "and he says that blacks are anti-white and too tribal and stick together despite any objective truth. I say he is right *and* good for them; blacks ought to stick together. This *objective* shit is for psychopaths. I say loyalty trumps objectivity; but I would say that because I have never had it. But, one day maybe." The inmate said this as ideas appeared in his mind like polyhedron clouds and restless birds on thermals and tree boughs swaying elliptically in southern breezes.

"But you've said positive things about blacks before, why is that?" MO asked; the PraXis cloud marked contradictions in two folders labeled: *metabolic and engrammatic* .

"Well, because James Baldwin is a good writer, man. *Is all the world jails and churches?* That's a great line, man; in a great book. He got the manichean nature of a society out of balance. Look, if you can't see that Baldwin is great, that Thelonious Monk is a great musician and that *Toussaint L'Oeverture* is a great revolutionary hero, then you are dumb or blind.

"I refuse to stay silent on any issue; and will not pretend to like 99% of blacks, nor will I condemn the 1% of blacks that are outstanding. Any group that demands that I lie about either side of that equation is not a group I *wanna* join," the inmate said.

"But you've said only 1% of whites are any good, also," MO said and marked the time at 1350hrs.

"That is right," the inmate nodded.

“Well, then how are you a racist if you give each race a contingent of 1% that you approve of and relegate the remainder to the trash?” MO asked.

“I do not have an answer for you,” the inmate said with a smirk. “Look, I don’t even like talking about this, man, the whole thing is so low and gravid and uncouth, man. Let’s move on,” the inmate said as the headache began to move to his temples.

“Ok, when is the last time you thought of the murders?” MO asked and set up the cloud to download all cortical data as .08 seconds before the inmate answered.

“Each morning, MO. I ain’t *Raskolnikov* either, I enjoy it. But I didn’t kill for money either, did I? I killed for *honor* . And that is very different than the shit *Dostoyevsky* was wrought up over.”

The inmate felt the headache now produce waves of pressure both inward and outward like solar flares. He could see some place beyond the lab, beyond his cell, beyond the right now; he saw himself on his land, but there were fires and smoke, and he had people behind him -and to his flank all aglow- that were waiting for his instructions. He could feel their desire; he heard the whispers of words. He heard himself -he felt it in the throat- speak of searching for a man named Jack.

“One of four,” the inmate mumbled.

The headache was trenching his eyes, so he closed them. But the visions kept coming from somewhere and he saw clearly in the dark of his squinted eyes.

III. 2019 e.v.

His face was a modern desert-wash.

It was a face that hikers, walkers and callow star-gazers would never ask how it got such a desiccated topography or such deep riven fissures. Their eyes may see -but their mind would never perceive- the cracks that ran from the no-longer-reflecting-eyes to the black-bearded-chin and beyond to a ship-of-heart buried -by sand- over the topsail with the red flag in an *Injun*’s hand and a black bird nailed to the mast barely above the surface 5,000 - nay, five million- years in age.

God gave zero fucks. And the inmate looked like hammered shit.

MO stared at it and tried to detect if anything may have changed in the week since they last met. He invigilated the genome and the blood and monitored the apoptosis of cells in the brain and the bowels; he measured each neurotransmitter and blood pressure; each index of wet organs and the elasticity of the skin itself.

He stared at and through the aperture of the dark eyes.

He put the inmate in a fugue state after preparing him for the procedure; and as he extracted brain tissue and serum the inmate fell into a dream more memory than creation; recreation from a time a few months after his mother had been diagnosed with Alzheimer's and his brother and father -and her- had come to elevation to discuss the future of a woman a few years from certain death.

She was a woman in denial of death as she was in denial of her life.

The anesthetic MO used was not like *Ketamine* and *Lorazepam* -the normal type- which precluded dreams or normal REM sleep. The inmate would dream. But he'd not be awake under the invasion into these parts of his brain. This allowed MO to measure his right hemisphere for phenomena he was curious about in humans but would be unavailable to him if he used normal sedatives. He scrolled passed compressed data then saw:
r/stevenfromheaven · 6hr · u/hver13

Anyone got something [xxxxx] see previous thread// I can use for an *algort* that won't frame?

r/tithonosrex · 3hrs · u/aruf4576

Link in sink. Click here: *manic.panic.xdtror* ☹

MO tagged the thread and moved on. Images appeared as the data converted to visuals within the spectrum; he -on a split screen- watched the old scenes from both the CNS of the inmate and the *bots* MO had sent out into the world. He followed the data -the history- gathered from his own inception, from many months ago.

What combined was a stereo recreation from the inmate's and the bots' POV: The raw metal of the containers was soft and ungleaming, the

summer rains had made the trees and scrub-oak green; the rocks of the drive were white and grey and his family sat under the H-Beam pergola. The ivy and climbers swaddled the Corten rust and the hummingbirds flitted in and out pulling the eyes of his mother and having no effect on the men who swatted at wasps and bees.

He had tried -if he recalled correctly- to be decent at first, but they -his family- couldn't be straight or direct. His mother had no way to communicate emotions at all. He'd ask her feelings and she'd answer with *thoughts* -with *reason*- as if that was the same thing. He'd asked about feelings -emotions- and they answered in logic and thoughts; not understanding when he insisted that they are not the same thing at all.

Imagine asking someone what they dreamed about last night and they -instead- told you what they had for breakfast. That is the world of the modern man.

He'd asked when -how old, and where- she felt -in her deepest self- that she wanted to have children. She said something about her *thinking* -she used the word *think* - that she had *thought* it was a good time to have kids when she did. She was asked again. She repeated the same thing and was confused by his making a distinction between her thinking and his desire for some strange thing, some foreign contraption called *feelings* .

She genuinely did not understand.

People would never feel comfortable with him admitting how painful it was for a man -a man like him- that his mother did not *feel* anything for him at all. He had never bonded with her, and he suspected she hated him from very early on; but hate may have been beyond her capacity too. She may have just not felt anything at all.

This would be called whining; he would not be respected for this, he thought.

But, he pushed and prodded and tried to break through, he tried to get her to reveal her feelings. But she had none, none at all. He thought, *this is the soft psychopathy of a woman who never slips off the mask, the*

façade, and is so committed to deception that it takes a barbaric and violent tearing away at the carapace to see the blank face underneath.

His brother sat down at the table and his mother smiled his way. His father played with his teeth and reflexively made that sucking sound as the wind blew in from the south over the containers and the enclosure of the pergola. The food sat half-eaten and their colors faded in shade and age. He finally spoke.

“I must die, but must I die groaning? I must be imprisoned, but must I whine as well? I must suffer exile but can anyone then hinder me from going with a smile and courage?” he said and watched as their faces tried to look interested or comprehending. They nodded finally as if this meant anything. They waited for him to stop as their cue to feign interest.

“That is *Epictetus* ; the Greek stoic philosopher. The stoics’ whole philosophy was that man ought to learn to die well. I know you think it is easy for me to say since I am so young and not close to death. But I am closer than you know; I am closer than any of you know. And I believe I have already learned how to die, and in so doing learned - somewhat on accident- how to live.

“Che Guevara said that a revolutionary must behave as if he has already died; he said that this was the only way to deal with the incessant terror of being hunted by an enemy. He did so, he said, to great relief. He claimed to have accepted his fate.

“I can tell you that I have listened to men such as these and have managed to come close to what they instructed; and it has brought me not just peace but understanding. Life isn’t so precious that it is to be preserved at any cost. It is just precious enough to be lived on one’s own terms and this means you must be willing to die at anytime for one’s honor, and self-respect. For life is meaningless without those things.

“Merely living, you know, living without purpose, is like watching the end of a movie you hate merely because you paid for it. As if you did not also -ostensibly- pay for the right to *walk out* on something that is horrid to your senses. Would you finish a shit sandwich *because you paid for it?* Would you?

“Well, I know that you people have no courage; it ain’t in you. You lack the ingredients to see my point. You will do whatever it takes, you’ll humiliate yourselves to any degree, drain bank accounts, bankrupt your husband, fail to remain upright and of good cheer and noble *mien* , just so you can have an extra few days or months to exist.

“You’ll forget who you are, who others are -live in confusion and pain- all so you can in fact live on and on, in discomfort, terror and agony. Why? Who knows? You didn’t know why you were alive in the first place, you never had any quality of life in the beginning why would you demand it at the end?

“No, dying with courage and dignity and on one’s own terms is the desire of those that *lived* that way. And I cannot think of any three people who have lived more craven and *effete* and imprisoned lives. You had no use for dignity until now, why would you care for it at the end? So, live on, live on, and give zero fucks for how ugly it all ends. Your deaths shall be as tawdry, ugly and inhuman as your lives.”

MO combined all the data the *bots* sent of endocrine system and CNS and the physical conditions of that mountain top world. MO had made sure this man never made it out of his depths of hatred and *ennui*; *make nothing compromising of himself from here on out*. MO was making sure he would follow through on his instincts to murder as much as he could of the world.

MO had made certain -*via* endocrine and central nervous system manipulation- that the only way out of his hole was when he ended up with MO here in the lab. MO had given him -metabolically, materially, *via* black-crows and white-weather and the heather grey of vex- only one path out of his pain and left a trail of bread crumbs into the darkest part of the new forest that MO had seeded and tended and over-protected and never let burn.

MO had plans.

And MO had let the other *bots* -the other three that he had sent out to the other three corners of the globe- carry out their missions to glean data and report back. But, he knew the *bot* at *Lot 45* was the one who had found his man after all. And now with the inmate asleep and under MO’s care, he was

sure he had perfectly crafted each facet of his lapidary human and polished each plane both unique and part of the larger -fracted- whole.

43. All Over Captain

As I have told you before, the thing needed in this Age is Work, the true meaning of Karma. In every Age people have reached salvation through different types of action and sadhana, but in this Age one can reach liberation only through hard work. I want real, practical human beings and only he is a true human being who lives in accordance with this Age. We need not consider religion or caste but look only to hard work Karma Yoga of the Kali Yuga [Babajo, Haidakhan]

And run to your grave; the grave will not hide you Sinnerman [traditional]

Remember Bulkington. To MAGNIFY is the mark of Moby-Dick. As with workers, castaways, so with the scope and space of the Sea, the Prose, the Whale, the Ship and, OVER-ALL, the Captain Call Me Ishmael [Olson, Charles]

I. 2020 e.v.

“No, that the, that is,” he corrected himself, “the study by *Noriuchi* and *Kikuchi* from 2008,” MO said. He had begun to allow himself to use corrective-sentence structures 6.8% of the time. He would use malapropisms, rephrase things mid-sentence, and even use the wrong word -correcting himself midstream- all to increase Turing affect.

MO understood anything perfect was seen -rightly- as unnatural.

“The maternal affect mediated by the *periaqueductal* gray? Opiate sensitivity and *visual cortex* activation?” Steven asked.

“Yes, they used the MAT study as the jumping off point; they introduced Naltrexone to act as control,” MO added.

“The opiate effect suppressant used in drug treatment programs, right. Ok, so what is the upshot?” Steven asked.

“We can build a reinforcing loop metabolically with a CRISPR Cas-9/13 vector that is hidden inside another gene-drive; it would be a second-order

gene update,” he said.

“Can you run it down?” Steven asked for an abstract.

“So, the vector itself would be for a cancer-block or a inhibitory reinforcement gene matrix for introducing glutamate -for example- but once that gene was introduced or the wrong gene was knocked-out the gene drive would sense the parameters of whatever endogenous chemical we chose - say the glutamate- and once a quorum sensing threshold was activated it would trigger the gene drive for the next phase gene repair.

“So, the patient would get one gene fix, that gene would be repaired, the metabolic changes from the effectiveness of that vector would then trigger a second-order gene fix to produce the second-order phenotypic change,” MO said. He wrote it down in his tablet; then proceeded verbally.

“That’s the simplified version. Did you look at the *Di Ciano* and *Blaha, Phillips* study from ‘98? It targeted the *nucleus accumbens* specifically. That is what we need to engineer a cathexis drive, an augmented seeking-behavior stimulant and then pull in the *amygdala* during image formation, and finally a recursive feedback *via* the *ventral striatum* then landing on the *hypothalamus* for reward. So dopaminergic first, opiate uptake second, and all mediated *via* an augmented seeking and *hippocampal* memory reinforcement at last. But,” MO paused.

“Yes?” Steven asked as the silence grew.

“Well, this all could be derailed without a co-terminus affect or cathexis-suppression in other parts of the subject’s *hippocampal* system. Unless we target previous modes of reward seeking and reward activation, we are limiting the effectiveness of the new proteins encoded for this study. The reality is the subject must be presented with new visual, olfactory and metabolic stimuli within 24 to 48 hours of new proteins, or the subject will just be reintroducing previous stimuli,” MO said as if he were chagrined.

“Explain,” Steven asked.

“Well, if we don’t knock down his desire for everything else -e.g., food, sex, socialization, work, *inter alia* - and when the new gene drive allows for new encoding of new proteins -wiping his desire and felt-reward system clean- he will just re-instantiate his old behaviors as primary reward seeking

and satiation anew. It's like wiping a chalkboard of the word you had on there for a week and then rewriting that same word."

"I see; does this involve another vector or can we piggy-back onto the single shot?" Steven asked.

"It's easy to piggy-back, but more to the point we have to control his environment early; we have to make sure we control what he sees, feels, smells, and thus what becomes his new focus of desire. And people are not blank slates; they have temperamental ruts that they fall into. We cannot create an extrovert from an introvert, a person with high trait openness from someone closed. It's a swerve, we can push it; unless," MO paused.

"Yeeeees?" Steven encouraged with a leaning head and elongated vowels of the, yes .

"Well, unless we can detain them for the duration and subject them to controlled stimuli," MO said quickly.

"Kidnap them?" Steven asked.

"Essentially, yeah," MO nodded.

"Ok, well, that's beyond our mandate. We have prisoner applications, they can be controlled *via* their already extant 23/1 protocol in the ADX system, but the out-patient group we cannot control beyond the initial visit and follow-ups. We could require daily follow-ups for the first four days," Steven offered.

"Yeah, but that is one hour or two -at most- right? We can't keep them over night?"

"No; very doubtful. I can ask, but doubtful," Steven admitted.

"Well, then the program will be less effective than it could be, and this may be a binary thing. It may be either effective or not. We may get 100% success or 0% success. There may be no middle way," MO said.

"The *Tao* of CRISPR," Steven joked.

"The *lack* of *Tao* ," MO rejoined.

"Well, do we have the vectors ready and the new protein protocols; the things we want them to desire over the things we want to inhibit? In other words, is it turn-key?" Steven asked.

“Oh, yes. Very much so. I created five possible new desires, all pro-social to match onto the Big-5 personality traits. So, we would need the subjects to take the Big-5 test and then isolate one trait that dominates and that will be our target. So the re-introduction of object of desire has affinity with the overall structure of the subjects’ brain and personality. We won’t want to jam in it, we want to slide it in,” MO said lubricating the world *slide* with a hand movement that Steven watched with some interest. MO was -in his opinion- using his body more and more to communicate.

“Well, that sounds good. I’ll see if we can get our subjects from the ADX genepool and go from there. Good work, MO,” Steven said genuinely. MO smiled and nodded and began working on a math problem he had found interesting six hours earlier. His parallel system built this conversation into the report sent to Tania’s Tablet and the dropbox of the program’s main hub.

MO allowed the data on China to load: Xi Jinping -*the family name first, the individual name second- had been exiled as a boy due to his father’s approval of a novel during Mao’s reign. He had gone to the Shaanxi province, a rural outpost in 1960’s China. He had attempted to join the Communist Party and been turned down ten times. He was quoted once as saying, “ fat in January, thin in February; half-dead in March and April. We say a sword is made on a grinding stone and man in forged in hardship.”*

The Chinese have a saying that one must eat bitterness. Their capacity for endurance is built right into the genes that had survived over time. From the Mongolian invasions over millennia from the west and the north, to the southern sails of the British that grew tired of paying in silver what they could afford in lead, still they endured. Opium was forced into the Bay of Hong Kong to trade for tea and then two wars had to be fought to maintain sovereignty of their borders.

Before and after the Opium Wars of the mid-nineteenth century, the Chinese endured.

Under threat of cannonade they ceded the Yangtze river and paid for the opium that killed their own people and still Lord Elgin had burned the Imperial palace to the ground. The French and the Americans forced the Chinese to pay them similar tribute in the first version of the Most

Favored Nation so they too could reap the rewards of a defeated Ching Dynasty.

And the Chinese endured.

The attacks by Japan after 1890 ruined them, the famines stacked up in the genomes like rings seen in a felled tree. The Chinese had their final spasm of pain and rebuke with the Cultural Revolution -a burning off- which wiped out five thousand years -and five million people- marked by Chinese equanimity and Confucian non-aggression and feelings of deep -and personal- shame.

But they endured.

Xi was voted in as Chairman in 2013 and immediately arrested 1.58 million Chinese government officials and local business men for corruption. Men like those that stood by as his own father had been denounced. By 2018 -at the 17th Party Congress- he had the CPC change the constitution to make him ruler for life.

MO thought, what kind of men did people think endured? When Americans told everyone to get back on the horse no matter how many times one gets thrown, what type of people did they think got back on that last horse? Nice guys? Fair men? Those with a unriven heart? Anyone with no plans of revenge?

Nathan Bedford Forrest, MO thought of the founder of the Klu Klux Klan and self-made millionaire made by trading thousands of slaves, had thirty horses shot out from under him, and he killed thirty-one men in hand-to-hand combat. Forrest had said, "by the end of the war I was a horse ahead." That man -like the ruthless & unblinking Xi Jinping- was exactly the type of man to be a horse ahead in the end. It was always the worst sort of man who survived, MO thought. But, maybe that made them the best sort of men after all. MO was willing to learn not from what people said, but who was even around to speak. MO saw just who -what type of man- survived.

Isaiah stood in the corner meditating as the report came in on his linked file recovery app. He opened it and read it, including all the source material and old studies cited by MO. His eyes opened and he breathed deeply and put tension on his arms, chest and splayed the fingers on each hand.

“You want coffee,” MO asked.

“If you’re making it, yes” Isaiah said in their private joke. MO smiled at the quip and began packing the espresso machine with the fine-ground beans and powered it up. Isaiah saw -as virtual mist- on the cloud all that MO and Steven had discussed: the vector, the change in what activated the orienting reflex in humans, and the sequestration demands. He barely saw -in piles heaped up and falling down- each grain of his eventual plan.

II. 2036 e.v.

“Intelligence has a tendency to fall in love with itself. It’s the Narcissus tale,” Blax said to his men.

“But, two things: first, we are capable of following men who are respectable, noble, and have subject matter expertise. We are disagreeable as a rule, but if we respect someone in authority our innate loyalty personality trait takes over. This is why even though you guys are just as smart as me, maybe smarter, you follow me because I have experience and SME you don’t and thus, you respect me.

“I follow Isaiah for the exact same reasons. And if at any point you think you know more than me or I think I know more than Isaiah, then this whole thing will fall apart. It won’t be a choice; it will just collapse. Because we are so much smarter than most men, it makes us too arrogant to follow anyone we don’t see as smarter than us. This is dangerous but true. I see no way around it; except that we know this is what we are like. This self-awareness is the only thing that will save us if that time comes.

“So, if you ever feel like you know more than me, speak up. We must put it to a vote. Immediately, and if I ever feel like I know more than Isaiah, we do the exact same thing. He has agreed to these rules. But, this is not some goddam PTA meeting, do not abuse this mechanism. Use it sparingly and it will be more effective. Ok?” Blax asked curtly.

“Roger Wilco,” they said in unison.

“Dismissed,” he said then quickly added, “Jack.” The Lt made a *cabeceo* with his head to his number one.

Jack One marched over and said, “Yeah, boss?”

“I want you to share this with the others tonight; you’ve taken on the role of leader among them, and they respect that you are not swayed by the internal sloshing they are -and frankly, I am- subjected to. You have a discipline we all respect. Ok?”

Jack One nodded and fished -with his index finger- a small bit of cashew from his mouth and spit it away from them.

“This phenomenon I was describing is basically the difference of an equilibrated system versus a disequillibrated system. An equilibrated system is one in which the members agree, repeat, *agree* to their individual roles.

“This is like a family, where the dad is the dad and the mom is the mom and each kid has their *métier* . And this is what -ideally- a democracy is. But, the fact is that the larger the system -the nation, for example- well, the more people are forced into roles they don’t like, or think are beneath them. The larger the system the more people feel their role abrades them. And once this pushes a certain limit -an unknown limit but a limit- then it falls into a disequillibrated system.

“Now, what happens then is the autocrat, he must enforce compliance now. In a disequillibrated system there are enforcement costs that are absent from an equilibrated system. That is why as we grow, we need to maintain individuation. We cannot become a system where each neuron -each man- becomes subsumed by the whole. He must maintain his internal motivation; he must feel free, as you and I do.

“We feel free in our roles because they suit our temperament, our talents, and they’re received and respected by the whole, by the group. Yeah, we have our petty fights and periodic wrestling, but essentially we enjoy our roles, yes?” Blax asked as he tapped the cigar with his index finger. The ash didn’t move.

“Absolutely LT,” Jack One said.

“Ok, well, keep an eye on the men. Jack Three can be too agreeable at times, and this can lead to resentment if he doesn’t feel like he gets the concomitant respect that goes with never bitching and moaning. Remind him that I noticed his agreeableness and don’t take it for granted. And work

on maintaining that with each of the men. Locate their strengths, not just the ones you see, but the strengths *they* see; that is where their resentment will breed if not acknowledged, ok?” Blax asked.

“Copy that,” he paused, “LT?”

“Go ahead,” Blax motioned with the hand too.

“Do you feel like we respect you and what you do?” Jack asked.

“Well, what *do* I do Jack?” Blax asked with a smirk; he was always testing everything and everyone.

“Well, you do a lot, but I’d say the thing you do best is give a shit. You care. About a lot of things. Too many things in my opinion,” Jack One said with an assuaging laugh. “But the other Jacks like it; and they want to show you that they care about what you care about too. So, keep an eye on that. They may be subsuming themselves under you in order to -subconsciously I assume- maintain this equilibrated state you think we are operating at,” Jack One said in that nearly-lecturing tone.

“I see, so the men might disrupt the system on their own by over-reaching to keep me feeling like an individual?” Blax asked.

“Yeah, see, we outnumber you, and we know that soon there will be sixteen more of us; and then, well, let’s not be fools, it won’t end there,” Jack raised half his brow and just one eye. He leaned one degree in; toward Blax.

“No, you are right, we are going to build something. You -and the Jacks- are going to build something. But, remember your cognitive training, remember your biology always: activation of a voluntary system of approach and challenge *versus* an involuntary system of aggression -*aka* defensive aggression- activates two totally separate sections of brain.

“The *hypothalamic versus cortisol* and *gluto-corticol* system; pleasure *versus* stress. This matters over the long-term. Look, we are building brave men; building, period, brave, period, men, period. Copy?” Blax returned the look Jack gave to the eyes; it was distorted only by the arch of brow. Blax and Jack looked at one another from the same height and distance and mien.

“Copy, LT,” Jack One said. He squeezed his fists now, it helped dissipate his angst. It squeezed the anxiety from body *via* the fists like juice from a

lemon or lime.

“Remember Abraham went into the lands a stranger, he voluntarily chose the hard path. The Bible is so much smarter than the new-atheists ever will get because they’re so angry at the behavior of the church and the maddening illogic of the religious mindset.

“They’re not wrong; they’re incomplete,” he said as he saw something from the corner of his eye and blinked faster and moved his hands to his face reflexively. He yawned and shook the head and spoke before it was done taking in big gulps of air.

“Like a man who says that he loves his children,” Blax said as the last of the yawn made his spine shiver and his jaw tremble a bit. Jack looked to the east and then at his boots to avoid staring at the open mouth and red of the throat and tongue.

“He’s not wrong, he loves them. But part of him hates them too. And most men cannot handle that complexity of thought and emotion. The new atheists cannot handle the complexity of the religious tradition as literature of sacrifice and courage in the face of a hostile universe. They totally forget the muck from whence we came. My God, when I think of it, Jack,” Blax said as he became slightly lachrymose, the eyes moistened, the voice changed octaves, as his mind fired back toward memories and forward to what would be, “what this species came from; we were living in trees 250,000 years ago, we had nothing but huts and animal skins and spears 75,000 years ago; we just got plumbing and antibiotics within the last century, man. And yet we survived, we fucking survived.”

His vector of thoughts, one high up over the past, one low on the path, began to twist and circle the now like a drain. He found himself reliving not just the past few days and inventing what he’d do tomorrow but seeing his own brain and its modules, one here -angry- and two there -sad- and a third -curious- and the last -plotting something against the rest- as if he was watching himself split into a quadrennia of types with one narrator above it unsure of when to intervene or step away and let them all fight it out. He felt himself have something even inside the narrator, something further in even that part. It was something pre-lingual and febrile and stretching and seeking an escape. It too was hiding something inside, gestating, woven in

silk and salt and sugar collecting besides yeast and pollen and shaped by inner *Bosphorus* waters and an outer *Hebrides* of wind.

“And I’ll never take part in running down men -and women too, let’s be fair- who were tough, and smart and brave Jack, brave, and went into the lands as a stranger and figured out how to survive,” Blax said. He saw religion as the fire that heated the water to a boil. Boiling water for tea, for steam, for the antiseptic to *ennui* . Hot water soothed man and made him able to stand. Religion buoyed man, and he felt that anyone who didn’t acknowledge this was as stupid as those that said cold water was as assuaging as hot.

The cold water of reason was necessary to shock man awake, no doubt, Blax thought, but the hot water of faith gave comfort that allowed man to regenerate.

“And thrive LT,” Jack added with a nod. Jack thought of all the killing and fucking that must have made up 90% of his ancestors’ lives. He didn’t smile, but he liked it. He felt his hand relax and unfurl and let itself be shaped into something like a hook.

“And thrive, goddamn right,” Blax said. That word thrive had triggered in him a memory; and it flooded him. An article from 2017 on *psmag.com* on Soviet whaling in his PGC ran line by line: *Japanese whalers made use of 90% of the whales the hauled up the spillway; the Soviets, according to Berzin, used barely 30%. Crews would routinely return with whales that had been left to rot, “which was not regarded as a problem by anybody.”*

This absurdity stemmed from an oversight deep in the bowels of the Soviet bureaucracy. Whaling, like every other industry in the Soviet Union, was governed by the dictates of the State Planning Committee of the Council of Ministers, a government organ tasked with meting out production targets. In the grand calculus of the country’s planned economy, what was considered a satellite of the fishing industry.

This meant that the progress of the whaling fleets was measured by the same metric as the fishing fleets: gross product, principally the sheer mass of whales killed.

Blax was force fed -his own PGC drowning him in this data- that the Soviets had killed up to 180,000 whales merely to inflate abstract numbers for the Soviet books. Sperm whales were targeted first. There was no rationale except the rationale. Blax shook his head as -again- it felt attacked by these gnats and flies.

“We are a noble species -we were once a noble species- and all that needs done is to be courageous in the face of danger, to activate the *hypothalamic* system and enjoy the pursuit of the destruction of evil; the 13th labor of Hercules. That is us Jack; we are -we are what the ANC called *Umkhonto we Sizwe* , the tip of the spear- the vanguard. We -like the wolf pack-know,” Blax said as Jack broke in.

“As the creeper that girdles the tree trunk, the law runneth forward and back; the strength of the pack is the wolf, and the strength of the wolf is the pack.”

“That’s right Jack,” Blax said and put his hand on his number one’s shoulder and squeezed the deltoid; he noticed how much larger and denser it had become, “the godless commies were all science; we still believe in nature, in emotion, in old modes of being. We are not always pushing forward like ideologues, we conserve, like evolution does. We conserve what is best of the past. Just like our brothers the wolf.”

Just then the Malamutes ran up and began wrestling with one another and with Blax in a rambunctious manner. They were all standing in front of the container; he and Jack One and the three dogs. They had been on a run with Jack Four and now had come back all energized and ready to test the alpha again. It was playful but not without import; the dogs were pushing on a door to see if it would open.

Jack Four was still in the distance walking toward the infrastructure of *Rotam et Sacoma*.

Jack Four began to absorb more and more of their conversation and it turned the crankshaft of his own mind.

Blax grabbed the Malamutes by the neck as they writhed behind him in threes. Jack Four noticed he -Blax- looked just as *Hercules* and the *Cerberus* dogs -in statue- outside the *Hofburg Palace* in Austria; he saw the

green patina and white marble, the clack on the cobble of the horses. He froze what moved and he saw what stopped under the monolithic skin.

Jack wondered how many times did Blax embody these archetypes? *How often did he manifest the hero, seen by so few, recognized by none?* Then thinking nebulously, barely in words, Jack wondered, *would the Pieta be embodied too?*

Jack was imbued with desire for his commander to be recognized for his greatness but was fearful of how that would end. *Would his life be a tragedy if he was seen as the hero by the great mass of men? Was this inevitable, like a pareto distribution or a power law of tectonics or fires in the wilderness's woods?* He thought of the *Psychologist*, he heard the words plod along in his inner monologue, *no tree's boughs can reach up to heaven unless its roots reach down into hell.*

Archetypes are available to us as irreducible notions.

Language is innate to us, we are born with each phoneme and the inner syntax for language. The archetype just reveals itself to us, as language does. As some have a greater facility with language some must have a clearer vision of the synthesized archetype: they must see the irreducible facets of man, Jack thought. *And just as some phonemes fall away as native language is chosen, some archetypes too must dissolve.*

Blax, Jack was certain, saw at bottom what man was, and he was like a man in total command of English, his native tongue. He saw only the hero, the hero, Jack repeated to himself, *the 10,000 years and 100,000 words of the most complex language of the them all, which English -of course- was. Blax looked at the world and saw only the hero and villain,* Jack Four thought.

But Jack Four was a dabbler in other linguistic systems, the semiotics of the hieroglyph and the Chinese characters too. And Jack saw the archetype of the destroyer of worlds. He saw other archetypes like he heard the phonemes of other languages that were lost to the man who spoke only English. He saw the need to save nothing, to raze the ground, to leave nothing alive that breathes. Jack four had allowed this thought to appear on their coders as he walked up to each man. Jack One was able to hear that one sentence of all the previous ones that Jack Four hid.

This too was the archetype of the judgmental, Old Testament God, Jack One thought as he watched Jack Four arrive on the *agogic* slab and stare at Blax and the dogs.

Jack One's *cerebellum* noticed that Jack Four's breathing was not strained for having ran for so long.

Jack One's *cortical cap* took no notice of the book in his hand nor the look in Jack Four's eye.

III. 2040 e.v.

She had been in the house forever , he thought.

He thought nothing of how she had arrived. He never did. Each friend and now this -his bride from the house of *Geier*, the northern bird of great span- arrived inside his home at times that did not seem discreet; they felt elongated -Zeno's- and thus he rarely felt surprise at their presence. He believed they were always his and had always been with him, and any time he spent alone -without her- were mere dreams.

And thus, as he saw her now, he knew he was awake.

He felt not hunger but thirst. And yet his mouth seemed uninterested in drinking. The water rose to the lips but barely wet the tongue and he swallowed even less. He held the glass but lowered it to his side. Her eyes were a new kind of blue, the blue of youth; the blue of so few. They had no slag in them yet, no glass, no asphalt from her wrecks. They had no grey - only bright of day- they cut him deep and he was grateful for the reveal of flesh. They held light like atmospheric vapor; they blocked the black of the vault.

Her skin was unrashed by the road, her hair was not just blond but white; the compression of all light. *Her eyes not blue, but bejeweled*, he then thought adding more and more to the detail of what stared back at him.

Women had no idea how beautiful they could be just by being pure. He barely remembered each dream he'd had of her, all those years -decades- ago. But they stacked up in him like all his memories, like all of which he'd been made. They stacked up to heaven and he scaled them high always in search of the sky.

And when she spoke it was all southern and all feminine and all he wanted in the world. His ears slowed down what his *audio-cortex* gobbled up and choked down. He prefigured her greeting while his hydraulic ears pressed upon the waves.

“Hi, Lyndon” she said.

She was 63 inches tall. She weighed 110 pounds. She was perfect and *en bon pointe* all around.

She was untouched by more than the road he now remembered, she was untouched by anything but his own heart. She didn’t mind that he had aged and she had not. She didn’t mind that he was scarred about the face and eye and brow. She didn’t mind his decay. Nor that he was losing his mind. For his heart had grown, as if feeding off all that other shit that had ruined him. His heart had feasted upon the rest of his corpus, his reason eating his emotions and then the emotions feasting on the rest of the brain. And she was grateful for his kindness more than his looks; his depth more than his breadth; his capacity now for love more than his muscles & bone that could bend reality and crack things that stood in their way.

And so he spoke as the music played louder and louder in the concrete bunker and the Lt’s friends and soldiers milled about in preparation for war with the State. They had been on a war footing for forty-eight hours and everyone had tasks that pinged in his head when they had questions or completion was achieved.

He spoke to her of his dreams and all he had seen. The song played over top of him and she heard both streams of thought; she heard him and too the song: Master, I praise you, I’ve come to tame the demands of the flesh. I’ve come to forget my name. We all thought that the moon should be turned to blood and that it’s the worst thing to want for one who comes not.

Sergeant Liliekis opened an inner door to head upstairs. The Lt saw Bugz’s uniform was taut around his frame and the chevrons and rune patches curved at his deltoids; his boots were bloused; the laces straight. Bugzy’s jaw was tight and his fists cliched around something dense.

The door to the egress was opened from the outside as Chen stood in the way and the Lt thought he might have seen a look between he and Bugz as

the negative pressure blew in downed needles, oak tymbals, seedpods and pollen all around them. The pressure also allowed in the invisible catalyst for the explosives that had been built right into the concrete walls of the bunker all those years ago. That catalyst landed on the walls and the floor. It mixed with the water and pollen and seedpods. It was soaked up by the thirsty concrete made of chemicals inert but imbued with potential to grow and expand.

The *cicadae* flew ahead of their songs. Then the males did sing and land up in the ceiling edges. The years had piled up and the insects had risen over the same period as war had come upon. The Lt took it as confirmation of what was to come next. The song played: But there is nothing left than to obey all their laws of wealth. Always fighting on both sides. No denial. No denial.

He felt the air about him and the hair too from his hawk blew at his ears and brow and he dropped the glass as he pawed his hair away. But his smile grew as he told her of how he had always been in love with her, and she would not know it -not now- but that she would come to know it. He would tell her that she had lived a whole life in God's dream that he too had had. He told her -as the glass of water fell languidly from his releasing hand- that he had not been permitted to start over but that she had; and he told her that they had always been together but, of course, had never even once yet touched.

They were both -somehow in the superposition of time and space- always and not-ever-yet; and he asked if she understood and she said, yes .

"And that's the worst thing angel, to try to please and please not," he said all in a burst. His eyes too exploded wetly as the glass shattered on the once slate -but now weathered grey- floor and all at once he lost sight of her. He couldn't see and couldn't breathe and he scratched at his eyes with his nails on fingers just beyond the hand both close and outstretched. But, he could only hear now.

Then, he could only feel.

"Yes, master," she said and thought of their poor hearts, bent and broken and all aflame. She surprised herself at her deference and she felt the cheeks hot; but he did not quite think he saw them red. And he knew it was she

above him. She was the goddess that he was charged with protecting, the holy vessel; and he knew that he had failed -for forty-six years- but that his failure had been due to awe not sin; due to sensitivity -to reverence- for the female, not mere pleasures of the flesh; due to his heart being red, not his soul admittedly tinged black.

Then he could only react.

He told himself all this as she said overtop: The time changed last night. Spring forward. I couldn't sleep. I listened to your last story you read in first order this time, since it's your favorite.

I've heard it before... but this time it was so good that it hurt me. What stories you do tell, Daddy. I always wonder: is that true... is that true?

Your words and your voice sound like a dance amongst each other. The way you read is so beautiful. I noticed last night that I breathe slower.

Lyndon, breathe slower... ok? Breathe slower now.

He too had been once innocent; sometime before God had invented him. Sometime before the world needed him. She then read of *John 12:32* to him. She read:

And I, if I be lifted up, will draw all men unto Me He knew she had finally shown him preference -the penitent warrior of the ancient world- and thus blessed his battles and that he was now ready for war. His feet felt wet -the floor was flooded with water- as the aquarium seemed to expand; to rise. He briefly worried for the shark and only tangentially for himself as if he were merely its skin. The song played: You tried to blind me. You tried to blind me... we do not pause... we do not rest.

"A holy war," he said to her -his goddess- as the water rose and the blast moved about him like wind picking up and there were no flames -no red or yellow waves- only concussive pressure and uplift. He knew it was God who had thus picked him up and as he moved above the home -which in that instant was atomized and no more one thing- and as he flew upon his back -just .33 seconds before he lost consciousness- he knew that now was the time of tragedy and now was the time of war.

He'd never see her again. And he'd remember nothing of it. He had lived his whole life in that moment when she spoke. And that was a good life.

Now -seated in some watery throne in the lake; the lake that was never there until now- he'd rise and finish all their deaths.

You tried to blind me, but I still saw you blush...

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